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JOHN LANE,

LONDON AND NEW YORK

Borrowed Plumes

By

Owen Seaman

*Author of "The Battle of the Bays"; "In Cap
and Bells"; "Horace at Cambridge," etc.*



New York
Henry Holt and Company
1902

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Published September, 1902.

TO
THE AUTHORS,
MANY OF THEM MY FRIENDS,
WHOSE METHODS I HAVE HERE ATTEMPTED
TO IMITATE;
AND, IN PARTICULAR, TO
PEARL MARY-TERESA CRAIGIE.

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BORROWED PLUMES.

I.

THE TWO ELIZABETHS.

[With acknowledgments to the respective Authors of those popular works, "Elizabeth and her German Garden" and "The Visits of Elizabeth." It will be seen that extracts from the former's Diary and from the latter's Letters are given alternately, the younger Elizabeth being supposed to arrive on a visit to the elder Elizabeth about the 7th of the month.]

MARCH 1ST.—I am writing this in my dear garden with the thermometer at fifteen below zero Centigrade. A tumultuous North-wind, with a kiss of East in it, is blowing straight off the Baltic, bringing up faint delicious odours of sea-icicles and

frozen Finn. I like these better than the smell of hyacinths, which seems to me too assertive. I often ask myself what order of mind it is that prefers new spring dresses and a town-flat to precious solitude and communion with a botanical dictionary. I open my treasure at random and read: *Galanthus*, *Gale*, *Galeobdolon*, *Galeopsis*, *Galingale*, *Gardenia*, *Garlic*, *Gastridium*. I shall send for whole trucks of these and have them planted in masses all over the carriage-drive. I wish I were less ignorant about their symptoms, but I cannot trust to the gardener, whose imagination does not rise above artichokes, which he talks of training up the sun-dial.

What a lovely solitary February it has been, with the virgin snow up to the bedroom windows and the crocuses waiting their time, all snug and warm under their eider-down quilt. As I look back to the day when I married the Man of War, with a cheerful carelessness of consequences, and no guarantee of a garden at all, and the prospect of his constant company, I wonder at my temerity. But it has worked out admira-

bly; and surely there are few women who can enjoy their husband's absence with such pure delight, and yet tolerate his presence with such equanimity.

And now Eleanor Lovelace must needs ask for her girl Elizabeth to pay me a visit for the sake of her German. I do hope she will not be too exacting and want society and tea-parties. The only rule of hospitality which I really understand is the one about speeding the parting guest. However, I hear she is very innocent and *ingénue* and so she ought to be fond of flowers. She may even have a soul, and be able to talk about the easier poets.

5TH.—*Château Chasse-Bébé.* Dearest Mamma,—I leave here to-morrow. I wish I hadn't got to stay with Gräfin Elizabeth. I know they won't any of them have waists, except the men, and they eat their food even worse than the French, and can't say nice things to make up for it. Still, it's time I left here anyway. Some of the men are *so* absent-minded, and keep on proposing to me in the billiard-room (not the English kind,

you know), and whole heaps of the 99th *Chasseurs* have pinched me in corridors and places, and I don't think this is quite respectful, do you, Mamma? And it is *so* awkward, because Célestine notices the marks on my arms when she is drying me after my tub, and this makes her very patronising and hinty, and the stuffing I put into my bedroom key-hole because of the draught keeps falling out, I can't *think* why. Two duels have been fought for some reason or other, I don't know what, in the deer-park and one in the middle of a steeplechase. Nobody was hurt, of course, but it makes people look awfully sheepish, and I'm sure it's time I left. I am picking up some new gowns from Rosalie's to astonish the Fatherland, though I don't know what the nearest garrison town is or whether they have fleets and things on the sea there, and goodnight, dear Mamma,

Your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

8TH.—I have hardly had time to discover whether Elizabeth has a soul, but her dinner-

gown and general attitude do not encourage this hope. I am a little afraid that she expected a house-party, or at least an officer or two to take her in. I may be obliged to send for the Man of War to amuse her. It sounds improbable, but in his heavy negative way he likes a young girl without ideas or yearning intelligence.

One thing that struck me as a deplorable revelation of her character was a remark that she made about some women who bored her ("stuffy people," she called them) on one of her visits; "nothing," she said, "rustled nicely when they walked, *and they had no scent on.*" Unfortunately she allows no such defect in her own toilette, and the scent she "has on" quite overpowers the pure fragrance of my snowdrops, besides being a detestable thing in itself. I even sigh for the Man of War's tobacco, and look forward to an afternoon with my artificial manures as a corrective.

I asked her the usual question at night—"You are not afraid of sleeping alone?" "Oh, no," she said, "I'm used to ghosts; there were whole stacks of them at Norman

Tower in the passages, and a funny old thing asked me to join them and he would take care of me, but I thought it would be such shivery work in the middle of the night." I am afraid Elizabeth's mother is not careful enough in her choice of houses for this young person to stay in. Girls with such beautifully childlike minds are often too unsuspecting of evil.

I ITH.—*Schloss Blumendam.* Dearest Mamma,—I can't *imagine* why you sent me here. It's been the stuffiest time I *ever* had. I'm the whole house-party in myself, and not a man of *any* kind in the place except the coachman who's married and the gardener who's engaged to the cook. It's *so* depressing, and I think Célestine means to go out of her mind. The Gräfin only has *two* dresses, and talks all day of nothing but flowers and guano, and have I read any good books lately, and of course I haven't, and I can't even think of any names to pretend with.

Once I thought something was really going to happen, when the Gräfin said that

she was looking forward excitedly to a whole heap of *teas*. I should have chosen dances myself, but teas are better than nothing, and sometimes you get a stray man to look in; and then it turned out that it was short for *tea-roses*. Such *dull* things to look forward to!

And then, again, I never get really shocked here. Oh, yes, once I was when the Gräfin said that she hoped that a lot of Rubenses wouldn't get into Madame Joseph Schwarz's bed by mistake again as they did last year. Of course I guessed that "Rubenses" were only pictures, but it *did* seem rather muddly for Madame Schwarz having them actually in her bed, and so many of them too, besides being very valuable, I should think, and easily damaged, especially if she is stout like most German women are. And I wondered if Madame Schwarz was a visitor or just the housekeeper; and when I asked if they weren't taken out at once, the Gräfin said that no, it was too late and they had to keep them there all the summer as it wasn't safe to move them. And then I asked wasn't it very uncomfortable for her

having to sleep on a crowd of old oils, or were they only very little ones, and was there room for her in the other half of the bed; and it turned out that it wasn't pictures, or a visitor, or a housekeeper at all, but just the names of different dwarf-roses!

Always roses and things! I thought I liked flowers till I came here, though I was never good at their names and used to mix up verbenas with scarlet-runners; but after this I know it will take away my appetite just seeing them on a dinner-table, and when I die, which I shall do pretty soon if things go on like this, I hope they'll have a notice put in the paper, saying, "*No flowers, please.*"

I don't wonder the Graf himself keeps away from his wife. I suppose her parents made him marry her like the poor Marquis at Chasse-Bébé. I really miss him and the Vicomte, and if Lord Valkop was here now I don't believe I should smack him so hard again, however he behaved, though they were rather forward, all of them, weren't they, Mamma?

Later.—Great news! The Gräfin says

vaguely that the Man-of-War is coming before the month is out. So perhaps there will be a dance on board, and anyway we ought to see something of the officers. Célestine is quite perking up at the thought of bosuns or whatever they call them here. The Gräfin speaks of *the* Man-of-War; so I suppose there isn't more than one in the German Navy. I *do* hope there's no mistake this time, and that it won't turn out to be a new bulb, or something of that sort.

Your affectionate daughter,
ELIZABETH.

15TH.—I remember reading in a wise book that a fresh acquaintance coming among close friends is always a bore. Well, Elizabeth is the fresh acquaintance, and the close friends are myself and I, which includes my garden and my books. I really believe the babies dimly understand, and are doing their best to act as buffers. The Michaelmas Goose baby, whose equilibrium is still unstable, drags Elizabeth about by her skirts, singing lustily her favourite Sunday hymn—" *Some day my earthly house*

will fall!” Yesterday, the March Hare baby tried to distract our visitor by an invitation to a game of Adam and Eve in the garden. “And you shall pwetend to be Eva, if you like, Fräulein Else,” she said, encouragingly.

“But wouldn’t it be rather cold?” protested Elizabeth.

The March Hare baby, who is much less ingenuous than Elizabeth, grew red in the cheeks and said, “You keeps your fings on, *natürlich*. It looks properlier.”

“And how will you do for a serpent?” asked Elizabeth, whose nature is sadly reliant on the concrete, and cannot realise the unseen world.

“We’se got a weal live snake,” said the May Meeting baby, “but it’s *gestuft*, so you won’t be bited.”

“And I will be the *Apfel*,” added the March Hare baby, “and when you eats me I will unagree wiv you insides.”

“But there isn’t anybody to be Adam,” said Elizabeth, thinking to raise an insurmountable difficulty.

The March Hare baby dealt with it

promptly and conclusively, not without some show of pity for Elizabeth's limited imagination. "The *Gartner*, he will be Adam," she said: "Adam, in Mummy's story, was a *Gartner*, *auch*."

The principal rôles being thus distributed, with the other babies as mute supers representing the lion pensive beside the lamb, symbols of the peace of Eden about to be so rudely disturbed, I was able to retire to what the play-bill would call "Another glade in Paradise," and talk in solitude with my larches. But that remark of Elizabeth's kept preying on my mind—" *There isn't anybody to be Adam!* " Such a want of imagination; and such a confession of a woman's standard of desire as popularly accepted! I shall certainly have to telegraph for the Man of War. For either he would consent to be amused by a kind of humour that differs essentially from mine, or else, if she failed to win him from his iron mood, he would direct her attention, with paralysing frankness, to the limited purpose served by all women in any decently ordered scheme of society.

19TH.—Dearest Mamma,—You can't *think* what a dismal time I am having. Some stodgy Fraus have called, but nothing in the shape of a man. And even then I didn't count because I wasn't married ; as if one could possibly marry a German, anyhow. What an awful price to pay for being allowed into their cackling old hen yards ! One of the frumps was talking of a French girl, in Berlin, whose engagement with a German officer was broken off because he saw her trying to climb on to the top of a tram-car. "Wasn't it real lace," I asked, "or was her ankle too bulgy ?" All the three Fraus turned round with a jerk and put up their glasses at me, and then looked at the Gräfin, as much as to say, "What is this thing ?" So the Gräfin explained to me that the French girl, being a foreigner like me, didn't know that the law wouldn't let women ride on the top of trams, because it was bad for morals. Aren't they *funny*, Mamma ? I know I should always be in prison or somewhere if I lived here ; not that it would make much difference, after being in this house.

I don't so much mind the plain living, and I could easily do without stupid damsons and things with my beef ; but it's what she calls the " high thinking " that is so difficult. Of course, I don't say aloud what I'm thinking about, but I know, by the Gräfin's eye, that she can always tell that it isn't high enough. Don't be surprised, will you, Mamma, if I telegraph some day for you to write and tell me to come home ? The only thing that consoles me here is looking forward to the Man-of-War coming. Meantime I'm wearing to a thread, and Célestine talks of taking in my waists, and I really ought to be as fat as possible to please the Man-of-War, because they must be used to the natives being podgy. So I shall go in for what they call Swine-cutlets and Munich Beer, which are very developing.

Your affectionate daughter,
ELIZABETH.

27TH.—I cannot pretend to be very sorry that Elizabeth has suddenly announced that she has to leave the day after to-morrow ; besides, I can now wire to the Man of War

to say that he need not come ; and so I shall have the pink silence of the pines all to myself. I really had tried to improve her by simple processes like the sight of a sunset through woods ; and when I saw a far-away look in her eyes I thought I was having a certain success, till she said, “ I *do* like that ; I simply *must* have a gown of that shade.” Failing here I was not likely to succeed on subtler points, such as the alertness of tulips or the stooping divinity of nasturtiums.

I think myself fortunate to have got rid of Elizabeth so easily. For a big girl, she is much too aggressively innocent. I always suspect people of that kind ; they seem like Persian Yellows, very plausible to the careless eye, but with strange crawling things inside them when you look closer.

And now to go and dance with my daffodils !

28TH.—Dearest Mamma, thank you for answering my telegram so quickly, and telling me I may come home at once. I will explain why. Such a *funny* thing happened four days ago. It came out as quite the

most natural thing in the world that the Gräfin is *married to the Man-of-War* ! You can guess how staggered I was, and nearly choked over my Swine-cutlet, because it sounded just like a harem, or something of that sort, only the other way about. I had hardly breath enough to ask if this was the same Man-of-War that she was expecting to-morrow, and the Gräfin looked quite surprised and said how could there be more than one Man-of-War, and I didn't know whether she meant that the German fleet was so small, but anyhow I agreed with her that one Man-of-War was quite enough to be married to at once, though I didn't say so. And then it struck me that if they were *all* married to her, all the officers I mean, there would be nobody left over for me, besides it not being quite nice for me to stay in a house with a hostess married to so many people, though Célestine says it wouldn't include the warrant-officers ; but then she is so selfish and only thinks about herself. And that's why I sent you the telegram, and please expect me soon after this arrives. Of course, I always said the Gräfin was a stuffy

old bore, but I never should have thought she was *quite* so wicked. I almost wonder you let me come here at all, don't you, Mamma ? And fancy me being afraid that the Man-of-War might turn out to be an innocent bulb, and I remain,

Your affectionate daughter,
ELIZABETH.

II.

“JOHN OLIVER HOBBS”

(MRS. CRAIGIE.)

[*Robert Orange.*]

ROBERT was passing through that crisis which is inevitable with those in whom the ideals of childhood survive an ordered scheme of ambition. His head was his Party's ; but his heart was in the “ Kingdom under the sea,” Lyonesse or another, not in the maps. He spent long hours of vigil over Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, in the original. He almost persuaded himself to join the French navy and invent another *Nautilus*. It was at this period of his career that Disraeli spoke of him as “ the submarine incorruptible.”

Later it became evident that the Church would claim her own. *Dépaysé* by arbitrary choice, his adopted name of Porridge

stood merely for the cooked article, the raw material being represented by his family name of Hautemille, a stock unrivalled in antiquity save by the Confucii and the Tubal-Cains; and to the last, even in intervals of the most exalted abstraction, he was a prey to poignant irritation when the comic journals (ever ready to play upon proper names) anglicized it phonetically as Hoatmeal. He repeated the *Chanson de Roland* verbatim every night in bed. But the noblest portion of him was wrought of bronze (or else putty) Latinity. His brain reeled to the lilt of the rhyming Fathers. He would himself compose even secular verse in this medium. A post-mortem examination of his portfolios brought to light the following *brochure* :

Da me, Carole, in fugam ;*
Te sequente, præcedam
Usque ad ecclesiam

* * *

“I will never believe,” said Poubaba (speaking in fluent Dutch, but with a Siberian accent which betrayed his Trans-

* Dare we trace in this the original of that justly popular song,
 “Chase me, Charlie” ?

Ural habit of thought—his parentage was Levantine, with a Maltese cross on the mother's side, and he himself a reputed traveller in Swedish liqueurs), “ I will never believe the Anglo-Teuton theory that the Latin races are doomed to perish, remaining extant in Alsace and the Channel Islands only. Solferino was a shock to that phantasy, and Fashoda will be its death-blow.” (It will be remembered that Major Marchand was still a mere child at the date of this prophecy.)

“ And Spain,” he cried, “ romantic home of lost Carloses, and odorous onions, and impossible Armadas—shall she suffer her colonies to bow to the brutal invader ? Never, while a breath is left in the swelling chests of her toreadors ! ” (This remark, again, is supposed to be made in 1869, prior to the late Cuban war, for which J. O. H., though American, was in no sort of way responsible.)

* * * *

For a growing girl, Midget's knowledge of the world showed a precocity which is only explicable by reference to her careful

training in the seclusion of a convent. Of her life with Lady Fitz-Blouse she wrote :—
“Consolatory platitudes exude from her brain with the facile fluency of her own saucy ringlets. Artlessness, in her case, has grown into an accomplishment so close to nature that it borders on sincerity. For answer, I fall back upon the history of the Bourbons. Really, the contemptuous attitude of these English toward uncrowned royalties is something appalling. Yesterday, in company of some pompous locals, to whom a foreign title is a thing *pour rire*, I was compelled, against my dearest principles, to play croquet. I stuck all the afternoon in the first hoop, wondering why I was an Archduchess. But I have not lived all these years without learning the value of self-repression. Remember me in your orisons.”

* * * *

Opposition, with Robert, had been the very food and drink from which he had wrung the cud of a brooding personality. *Chew thyself* was his habitual rule of life. Mastered now by an indefinable sensation,

made up of the elements of passion and brotherly love, and yet not strictly to be analysed as either, he found his occupation gone. The rarefied atmosphere of his new environment was too strong for him. No prig could hope to live in it—not comfortably.

* * * *

It will be convenient here to give a short extract of the very full notes taken by the deck-steward of the St. Malo packet during the extended prelude of Robert's abortive honeymoon. (In 1869 the progress of these vessels was marked by a much greater deliberation.) “ ‘ My experience of human nature,’ I overheard the lady say, ‘ allows me to read your thoughts. Taught to indulge yourself in the gratification derived from self-sacrifice, you are suspicious of a Paradise which offers no useful scope for renunciation. You suffer the chagrin of not being a martyr to anything in particular.’

“ ‘ Midget,’ replied the gentleman, ‘ you intrude upon the sanctity of my private soul. I am engaged just now over the enigma of a submerged identity.’

“ ‘I knew it,’ said the lady. ‘There are obscure *penetralia* in your ethical system of which not even your wife is allowed the *entrée*. We may be married lovers, but we can never, never, be friends !’

“ ‘Do not ask me to sate your curiosity,’ said the gentleman. ‘It would run into another six-shilling volume.’ ”

* * * *

Lady Tarara - Gloriana - Mesopotamia - Variété de Pimpernel was wearing a sherry-coloured dress with canary facings, which enhanced the distinction, while it mitigated the obtrusiveness, of the Hittite streak in her complexion. Reserved yet expansive, sincere yet tortuous, cold yet inflammable, self-absorbed yet centrifugal, capable of devoutness yet also *capable de tout*, she was a mystery to most and a contradiction to all. Certainly she was too complex for Bien-entendue Fitz-Blouse, whose ingenuous nature was content to oscillate uneasily between a single pair of emotions—the faint memory of her first husband, and the fainter hope of securing Robert Porridge for her second. The two

women had little in common beside their womanhood (shared by the sex) and their desire for Robert (shared by a considerable section of it).

* * * *

“ I think Mr. Browning is *so* true about soul and sense,” said Bien-entendue. “ Women, especially, seem to be half spiritual and half sensible.”

“ Half sensible ? ” said Lady Tarara-etc., bitterly. “ I find them altogether stupid.”

“ I knew you must be badly in love, dear,” said Bien-entendue, with quick intuition. “ Who is it ? Mine’s Robert Porridge.”

She spoke with a simple candour that invited confidence.

Lady Tarara-etc.’s steel belt, studded with black pearls, snapped abruptly and flew across the boudoir ; but she gave no other sign of the internal shock that she had sustained.

“ And mine,” she replied, as she collected the fragments with perfect aplomb, “ mine is—Lord Flotsam.” She was a gifted

woman. The lie had a superb air of probability.

“Have you tried playing Patience, dear?” said Bien-entendue, very gently. “The ‘Demon’ is so good for the nerves. I often say to myself,” she added, with a woman’s tact for easy digression, “that life is indeed a school for saints. I do so dislike schools for saints. They sound like convents, and seem so *French*. Poor dear Alfred was very English, you know.”

“There ought only to be boys’ schools for saints,” said Tarara-etc. ; “and yet,” with a sudden fury, “I could be as pious as a Vestal if a man’s love was to be got by it. Ah ! Bah !”

“I should think Lord Flotsam must be a very beautiful character,” said Bien-entendue, innocently.

* * * *

To Robert it was a matter of heart-searching that his sense of Midget’s nearness varied inversely with her physical proximity. Thus when she was a hundred miles away, he would inadvertently order dinner for two ; but when he actually kissed her, as

on the exceptional occasion of their betrothal, it seemed that she was almost round the corner of the next street. This gave a certain remoteness to his embrace, which still was recorded on the sensitive tablets of his conscience as a desecration. A little more of this strain and his taste for humour would have been permanently impaired.

Flotsam, indeed, was uneasy about the marriage. To him the undivided devotion of his select circle was a thing too sacred to be lightly disturbed. To a friend who once reminded him that it is more blessed to give than to receive, he replied that in the case of true friendship he was prepared to waive the higher privilege. Yet it was not only for himself that he was concerned. True, he would miss Robert at piquet ; but what was piquet compared with his friend's highest happiness, if such a marriage could consummate it ? But could it ? Wives, according to his creed, were ordained by Providence (an Institution which Flotsam had always supported as a matter of political conviction) to serve as the conventional decoration of a man's career ; a mere favour

(on the man's part) attached to his serious fighting panoply. Robert's more lofty conception of their purpose filled his friend with a despondent awe, which lent to his appearance as "best man" a very natural and becoming dignity.

* * * *

The two men took up their ground, each with his pistol leaning up against the other's forehead. But here it is best to follow Robert's own description, addressed, the day after, to his patron, Lord Isle of Rum :—" "Is it to be *à l'outrance*?' I asked. '*À l'outrance*,' he replied, with a slight intonation of contempt, as if my French had been at fault ; as if, in fact, I had given a false rendering of some notice-board at an exhibition directing people 'To the Egress.' Yet you, my Lord, have not devoted the best of your manhood to mediæval research without attaining to know that his inclusion of the definite article has the sanction of all the highest authorities on the *duello*. It was a subtle triumph of culture that I had achieved, after which it seemed a relative

grossness to blow his head off. You will guess that it killed him.

“I admit that in my more sentient moments I suffer regrets. One may argue that it was not a lingering death; yet to kill a man, by whatever process, is an act that must ever remain irretrievable. Nor are my regrets adequately silenced by the reflection that his brain was his weakest point. Do not think me callous. Sarcasm is the relief of a mind too acutely alive to the pitifulness of mortality. Naturally, I am moving on. If your gout permits, address me, *Hôtel de la Résignation, Roma.*”

* * * *

The following passage is taken from an interview with Mr. Disraeli, published at a later period :—“Yes; after the duel he applied for the Chiltern Hundreds. I forwarded them, with reluctance, to his Italian address. *C’était un homme d’un bien beau passé*, as Heine wrote of De Musset. His was a nature that throve on obstacles, and would have found the garden of the Hesperides intolerable with the dragon away. These scruples were respected by the lady

who was free to become his wife. A weaker woman might have taken the veil : she retired into histrionics ; and, as I understand, still enjoys a very passable repute. To speculate here on the familiar doctrine of general cussedness would be a laborious superfluity. I will content myself—as one who has ever obeyed the guidance of his own instincts—with an occasional apophthegm which I cull from my *répertoire*:—

“ A fool is swept away by his impulses: a wise man parleys with them: only a god can afford to follow them blindly.”

[*A Serious Wooing.*]

“ AND where shall we go for our summer elopement *this* year, dearest ? ” said Jocelyn, as they stood locked in each other’s arms. “ Would Nuremberg suit you ? ”

“ What route do you propose ? ” asked Rosabel, suddenly practical, and extricating herself from his grasp.

“ I suggest the Hook of Holland and the Rhine to Mayence. Have you any prejudices in the matter ? ”

“ How do you get to the Hook of Holland ? ”

“ By the Great Eastern, from Liverpool Street to Harwich. But why this unwomanly regard for detail ? I hardly know you, Rosabel, in this new attitude.”

“ Is Liverpool Street the only starting-point for Harwich ? ” She insisted with a strange perseverance.

“ Rosabel, Rosabel, you have changed surprisingly since our last elopement. Is it the influence of your second marriage ? You never talked like this before. You were never importunate about termini. Can you have lost your old confidence in me ? ”

“ Never, never ! But we must be frank with one another, and face the truth. We shall have many embarrassments to contend with in our coming irregular career ; let us not anticipate them ; let us at least hold together, you and I. Is Liverpool Street the only starting-point for Harwich ? ”

“ Yes, a thousand times yes. And now kindly explain.”

A sigh of satisfaction escaped from Rosabel. “ Dearest,” she said, “ between those

who love no explanation should be needed. But I too will be frank with you. I have not lived this long, weary time apart from you without growing older and knowing more of the world. Never again, with my eyes open, will I elope with anyone on a system with alternative routes, such as the Chatham and South-Eastern. Have you already forgotten the *fiasco* of our first elopement? How it fell through, as it were, between two stools—namely, Victoria and Charing Cross? And my first husband lying dead at the time, and I ignorant of that *fait accompli*? It is by these little accidents—an unforeseen change of terminus at the last moment, for instance—that the entire destinies of two lives may be permanently bifurcated. But for those alternative routes we might have reached Marseilles together, read of my first husband's death in the papers, got married at the consulate, and been an honest man and woman ever afterwards."

"‘Honest,’ Rosabel? What is this new talk of technical virtue, based on signatures before witnesses? Do you, after all, regret

the step we are once more taking in defiance of social tradition? *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte.* This is the second of the kind.”

“No, my love, I am not drawing back. But a second elopement, even with the same man, can never be *quite* the same thing. The first prompt, instinctive glow is irrevocably gone. One becomes rational, almost worldly in one's unworldliness. But my mind is fixed; I shall not fail you. To-night, then, at Liverpool Street, for the Hook.” (She smiled a little pathetically at this unpremeditated pleasantry.) “You will get the tickets—single tickets, of course. I must go home for my Church Service and hand-mirror, and to leave a p.p.c. on my second husband. Remember! Liverpool Street.”

III.

MISS ELLEN THORNEYCROFT FOWLER.

[*A Double Thread.*]

“NOTHING in a woman, my dear Ethel-frida, betrays such lack of social *savoir faire* as the habit of telling fibs,” said Lady Wolverhampton. “No sensible man ever believes that a woman means what she says; and that makes it so much safer to tell the truth. That’s how I married Wolverhampton. I told him I had never cared for any man, and he at once became jealous—as I meant he should. If a woman ever becomes a bishop-elect it will be quite useless for her to say, ‘*Non volo episcopare.*’ ”

“By your ladyship’s leave, is it not ‘*Nolo episcopari*’ ? ” said Lord Bathbrick.

“If you were not a man, Bathbrick,” replied Lady Wolverhampton, “you would know that knowledge of the Classics is such bad form in a woman ; almost like working for your living. But, talking of the sexes, I wonder, Ethelfrida, that you have never married any one. It seems such an oversight ; the sort of thing that is inexcusable in a well-bred girl.”

The heiress turned a cynical eye upon her visitor. “It would be worth while to be a beggar-maid,” she said, “if one could make sure of being taken in to dinner by Cophetua. As it is, I am modest enough to believe that my money is the only reason for my popularity.”

“And a very good reason too, my dear,” said Lady Wolverhampton, “if you *must* have one ; though there is nothing so unreasonable as a good reason. No man ever yet married a woman for herself, seeing that he could have no possible means of knowing what her actual self was like. They marry us for our hair, or our faces, or the virtues they think we have, or the money of which they are quite certain. And none of

these, not even our hair, is an essential part of our permanent selves."

"But I thought, dear lady," interrupted Lord Bathbrick, "that you always said your husband married you for yourself."

"There you are wrong, Bathbrick. It was *I* who married *him*. I got quite a respect for him through never noticing him when he was there, or being able to remember what he was like when he was away. An excellent test of good style. Your well-bred person should have no manners; none, at least, perceptible to the eye. Just as when you ask a man what sort of gown a woman was wearing at a ball, it has always escaped his notice, unless it was either overdone or underdone. And that reminds me that I could never see either sense or grammar in the saying, *Manners maketh man*. Man is born that way, he isn't made."

"I can't imagine, my dear Adeline," said Ethelfrida, with her slight nasal drawl, "how you contrive to say all those clever things on the spur of the moment. How *do* you do it? I'm always trying."

"Don't be satirical, my dear," said Lady

Wolverhampton ; “ it is bad manners, and doesn't suit your child-like cast of countenance. The thing is so simple that it is naturally inexplicable. I just jot down these little *jeux d'esprit* as I work them out in bed, or at church, or when Wolverhampton is talking to me ; and then I run through them before paying calls or receiving people. No impromptu ever has a true air of spontaneity unless it has been ‘ made at leisure.’ ”

“ A most original paradox, my lady,” said Lord Bathbrick.

“ I wish, Bathbrick, you would not keep on throwing my title in my teeth,” said Lady Wolverhampton. “ Such things are taken for granted and never mentioned among well-bred people. They ought to resemble the abstract noun in the definition of the small board-school girl : ‘ An abstract noun is a thing that every one knows of but nobody talks about—*like Mary's leg.*’ As for paradoxes, I begin to fear their mode is passed ; the latest piquancy is only to be found in truisms. Nowadays, if you say in the good old-fashioned manner, ‘ Charity is the one unpardonable sin,’ nobody pretends

not to understand you ; whereas if you say, ' There is nothing so essentially feminine as a woman,' people suspect a hidden meaning and try to conceal their uncomfortableness."

" But how do you manage," asked Ethelfrida, " to run off all these epigrams in the course of a conversation without any apparent solution of logical continuity ? "

" Tact, my dear, tact. To absorb the conversation yourself is a sign of ill-breeding ; nice people reach the same result by ignoring interruption ; or, what is better still, and corresponds to the sleight-of-hand by which a card is forced, you compel the others involuntarily to lead up to your next remark. This is easy enough in books where the author has it all his own way ; but in real life it requires tact, as I just now observed."

" But suppose you found yourself conversing with somebody possessed of equal tact ? " asked Ethelfrida, with that slight air of *ennui* which is characteristic of spoilt women of the world.

" I never do," said Lady Wolverhampton. " It would be too tiresome sitting there

like a Christy Minstrel with a black face saying funny things in your turn."

"Yes," said Lord Bathbrick, "and beginning every time with 'That reminds me of a story.'"

"I know: and it never really *does* remind them. What they mean is, 'Your stupid interruption nearly put my next good story out of my head. It was about, &c.'"

"I wonder," said Ethelfrida, with a touch of bitterness at the thin end of her tongue, "that you have never written a book. It would be so *very* clever."

"My dear," said Lady Wolverhampton, "I can't afford to do it. It would be like killing the goose that lays the nuggets. Besides, it might have a vulgar success; and that would be so tiresome. And then I could never manage the plot. You see, well-bred people hardly ever have plots in their lives. The very word always makes me think of a kitchen garden in a pauper's allotment. I once had an idea about a girl like yourself, blest with all the good things of life, including a pretty face and a long tongue, with which she lashed every lover whom she sus-

pected of wanting her money. But at last the real Dan Cupid, as she called him, came her way. He was quite a nice boy, and sound on vaccination and that sort of thing, but he fought shy of her money and her long tongue. She had never been in love before, and she was much too clever to understand how so easy a thing is done. So she thought she would get a testimonial of his honesty, as if he were applying for a place as butler."

"Or cook?" suggested Lord Bathbrick.

"Or cook, as you say. But don't interrupt me, Bathbrick. Well, she gave out that she had a destitute twin sister, hopelessly estranged, and no better than she should be. This twin was the speaking image of her, only dressed dowdily, and with her hair done just anyhow. And the nice boy met the penniless girl and fell in love with her. Twin No. 1 had only got to frumple her hair, put on a misfit and shorten her tongue, and she was transformed, as by magic, into twin No. 2; and the nice boy would never have found out that there was only one of them, if she had not confessed. And then he was sick to death at the trick

and said she was no gentlewoman. You know how touchy men are on these ridiculously trivial points of honour."

"Yes, I know," said Ethelfrida; "whereas *you*, dear, would consider that you had been untrue to your feminine instincts if any man suspected you of having scruples."

Lady Wolverhampton took a short breath abstractedly.

"Well," she continued, "the girl apologised; which, of course, no womanly girl would ever do; with the result that he ran away and went on with being a soldier somewhere in India. Oh, of course she got him back all right in the last chapter; but the whole thing was too absurd for words. Not that that matters much with the public: they forgive an improbably stupid plot, if only the dialogue is impossibly clever; which mine was. But, as I said, I found I could not afford to publish all my best epigrams, with openings to match. And that reminds me that I must be off, as I have some people to dinner, and there is a new phrase-book to run through. Good-bye, my dear; so many thanks for your charming conversation. Come along, Bathbrick."

[*The Farringdons.*]

"I'M sure Eton will win," said Lady Kidderminster, oracularly. "Look at their colours ; it's a struggle between the powers of light and the powers of darkness, like the war in China."

"They can't exactly *win*," said Lord Gosling ; "you see, it's a tie already."

"You were always so practical and prosaic, Gosling. But if it's a tie why aren't they satisfied to stop, instead of running about in the sun and making everybody feel so hot, and noisy ?"

"Ties are made to be broken," said Lord Tommy. "And yet half the people here want this tie *not* to be broken. It's rather like the different parties in a Divorce Court."

"Unless there is no defence," said Lady Kidderminster.

"But there's a very good defence going on at the wickets," said Lord Tommy.

"Or else collusion," continued her ladyship, "as when Kidderminster proposed to me. I wish they wouldn't shout so : it

makes you forget the things you were going to say. Oh, Harrow's won, have they? I knew they would!"

* * * *

"You were very reserved at Lord's the other day, Mr. Quarquar," said Deborah. "Were you out of dream-sympathy with the rushing world of frivolity?"

"I suppose your fine friends are very brilliant and scintillating, Miss Aldersgate?" replied Quarquar, bitterly; "but I found their conversation lacking in intensity of purpose. My soul seemed to stretch out to you across a wilderness of fatuities."

He spoke with that indefinable charm which so often imposes upon the amateur female artist.

"You must not judge them too harshly," said Deborah. "Genius like yours should be generous to the foibles of others less gifted. It was not their fault that they were born to the purple."

"I glory," said Quarquar, "in the fact that I am essentially middle-class without being too obviously vulgar. After all, these blue-blooded worldlings only tolerate you.

They would never invite you to share their future, as I at this moment invite you."

"I admit," replied Deborah, "that I find you sympathetic. I respect your artistic talent, particularly in the matter of colour-schemes and backgrounds; and I have the true woman's desire to improve you. But can I, on this account, be accurately described as entertaining a passionate love for you?"

"Assuredly," replied Quarquar.

"Then I will take till Michaelmas to think it over," said Deborah. "But it upsets all my previous calculations to feel so undecided. Everything seems to conspire in your favour; you paint, you are earnest, you need improving, and you are unmarried; yet—if you don't much mind—I will take the rest of the current quarter to think it over."

IV.

AN ENGLISHWOMAN'S LOVE-LETTERS.

MY DEAR AUNT,—I am about to send you a heavy batch of love-letters. Do not be shocked. I recognise that we are within the prohibited degrees. They are only female-love-letters made out of my head. You will understand that I have disguised my sex; reversing, out of deference to modern feeling, the process of George Eliot and others. I was naturally tempted to call my work “The Love-Letters of Elizabeth,” that name being now almost de rigueur in the trade; but I have been content to say “An Englishwoman has done this thing.” You might be good enough to get them published for me, and affix a preface (in a different style from that of the letters) saying, (1) that they were originally sacred and meant for the eyes of One Only; (2) that

the author is dead; (3) that exceptional circumstances have arisen, &c.; and (4) anything else that may occur to you as likely to intrigue the public. I am sending them to you because you are the only woman that I know at all well whose handwriting is at once feminine and legible. This is necessary for imposing on a publisher's innocence. I shall trust you to amend anything that strikes you as too unladylike; and, in the hope that you will kindly remit profits to me at the old address, I sign myself,

Your ever anonymous,

NEPHEW.

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BRIGHTEST AND BEST,—This is the first of a long and steady series of love-letters that are to come from my swelling heart. Need I say that they are not for publication? No eye but yours, not even your butler's, must ever see them. I have a trunk full of letters of responsive love, written daily during the weary six months of our blossoming friendship. Each was ready stamped at the time, in case your proposal arrived before the bag went out. And now,

at last, at last, I have hooked you. Dear fish! and you are man enough to imagine the victory yours! See, I give my sex away, and am too glad to blush! I never blush now. Till to-morrow.

Your Compleat Angler.

* * * *

MOST THOROUGHLY BELOVED,—Had you an egg for breakfast? I had. I take a new and absorbing interest in myself, now that I am part of you! As a child I have been radiantly happy over mud pies. I must believe now that somewhere your dear hands were contemporaneously busy with the same luscious compound. Otherwise the joy I then had is inexplicable. I was to tell you of a wasp on my window-sill, and a new dress, also with a sting in its tail, into whose making I have put all my love for you, and how I saw a rabbit, during the transit of Venus, sucking dandelions on the lawn; but I am so fearful that you will look for mysteries between the lines, and despair of following me. Your ever amorous.

* * * *

OWN,—Shall we give each other names

from the stars, that we may wink together when apart? Yes? Then I will be Virgo, and you shall be the Great Bear that hugs me. It is my birthday, and you did not know! Somehow, I could not tell you: so strange a thing is a really nice woman's reserve.

* * * *

MOST PATIENT,—The post has this moment gone with my letter, finished just in time. So I sit down to begin another. I could go on writing without a break except for meals; but pity is at the heart of my love.

* * * *

LOVELIEST,—You have won the right to know my past. I will not withhold from you that an intermittent fever, something like nettle-rash, used to possess me when I dreamed of one day being a maker of books. Now that I have you, I have no care for a larger public. And, indeed, it is a *man's* career. For woman there is love and there is beauty. My heart is my warrant for the one; for the other, it ripens daily in my mirror. Happy Mercury! though perhaps

it is for you, rather than me, to say it.
Please say it.

* * * *

MY STAR, MY GREAT BEAR,—I have your very own letter acknowledging my six last, which seem to have arrived by consecutive posts. You ask me if I do not weary myself, and whether I could not contrive to say a little less. Dear Altruist! I do not, and I could not, if I tried.

Your importunate

* * * *

ABSENT YET PRESENT,—What, what is this of your sickness, and me not by to touch the spot? To think that you should be laid up with “servant’s knee”! Why, it is I, who am one large genuflexion at your feet, that should suffer in that sort. Do not fear that I should love you less, though both your knees should perish utterly. You are you, and cannot essentially change. I send you Browning’s *Jocoseria* for a love-potion. Your Nana (not Zola’s, but meaning your Nurse that would be).

* * * *

POOR, POOR,—So the medicine was worse

than the disease, and the "servant's knee" has given place to a strain in your dear mind? It was thoughtless to send you Browning, when you were too weak to bear him. Be appeased, beloved! Where your mother has failed, it will take something more than Browning to sever us. Here is Baedeker in his stead, that you may picture me in Italy, for which I start next week. My body, that is, for my spirit will bestride your pillow. In Paradise, I think, there will be no side-saddles. Ever your astral.

* * * *

Never doubt me, dearest. I would not dream of setting up my opinion against yours. I have seen your mother but once; you must have met her far, far, oftener. But then, I think, she could never have accused you, even tacitly, of suffering from hereditary madness. Here, quite humbly, I have the advantage of you in my experience of her. Forgive my presumption; you know how easily I would lay down my life for you at the first *soupeçon* of your wish that way. When will you put me to the test? To-morrow? Then it must be by the

morning post, as we leave in the afternoon for the Continent, where my address is uncertain. *Moribunda te saluto.*

* * * *

DEAREST INNOMINATO,—You have my letters, one from Dover, two from the Calais buffet, and a post-card from each end of the St. Gotthard Tunnel? Arno is under me as I write. The architecture of Florence is aldermanic: it glorifies the municipal idea. One misses the reach-me-up of the soaring Gothic. I am just back from the Academia delle Belle Arti. (You don't mind my spelling it with only one *c*? It is a weakness I cannot conquer.) I thought I knew my Lippo of the prim Madonnas, that so belie the known levity of their model. But one has first to see his "Coronation," where his own portrait shows most profane among "the flowery, bowery angel-brood," beside the brazen "little lily-thing" who makes apology for his intrusion (and hers, too, for that matter) with her unanswerable "*Iste perfecit opus.*" Lucky "St. Lucy"! If I were Florentine, and not, as you know, an Englishwoman abroad, engaged to be mar-

ried, and could choose from all this city's centuries a man to love, certainly this same Lippo should have my heart.

“ Flower o' the broom,
Take away love and our earth is a tomb.”

Whoever—it should not be Lucrezia's half-souled del Sarto, though he does get more atmosphere into his work than most of them. How Browning has made these dead bones live for us with his touch of Fancy, re-creating Fact! But I forgot; you begged me, as I loved you, not to mention him. Yet he, too, wrote love-letters; as I have heard, for I would never suffer myself to read them; such a desecration it seems to have given them to the gaping public. Dearest, you would never allow this sacrilege, I well know. Still, now that I glance through my remarks on Lippo it seems too pretty a piece of writing to fade unseen of the general eye of man. Might we not, after all, some day print extracts from such of my letters as seem to have a permanent value for the world? For instance, I shall have some fresh thoughts on the Renaissance to send you in my next.

But I have omitted all this while to say that your face, and yours only, fills every canvas here. Kiss your mother for me. This is not a joke. *Addio! Buoni sogni!*

* * * *

Out of a gondola "I send my heart up to thee, all my heart." I want you here in Venice, to hold you by the hand and teach you things about Art not to be found even in Baedeker. I should be the man, and you would be the woman—in this Kingdom by the Sea, as Mr. Swinburne said of Georges Sand and De Musset. You have heard of these people, beloved?

My Italian betters itself. I had a fancy, when I saw *Dogana* written up in the railway station on my arrival here, that it was the feminine of *Doge* and so should mean the Sea, because the Doges used to wed it with a ring. Of course, it was really the Custom House (*Douane*). We call our pet gondolier Ippopotamo, because, for lack of cabs, he is our river-horse. Who was the old lady who complained that she did not see Venice under favourable conditions, *as it was flooded?* No thought but of you.

* * * *

By all means, dearest, make an armistice with your mother, and let us all go into winter-quarters. I remember, the first (and only) time I saw her, she had such an air of maternity that I almost asked her if she knew you were out. Frankly, beloved, she is really rather an old hen; or shall we say she is most (or should it be *more*) like Calverley's parroquet that declined to die? It was imbecile, too, you know; the very epithet your mother applied, by implication, to my mother. Still, I must love her a little, since, but for her, how could I have known you? In any case, my whole love to her son.

* * * *

MOST NEAR,—This must be a very, very short letter, as I can hear your horse's gallop in the lane. You are coming, beloved, you are coming!

I am just returned from the gate. It was the butcher's boy. I kissed his feet from mere association of ideas. You are not jealous? He is nothing, nothing to me, except that just now he seemed to take your rightful place. See, I lay my cheek on the

words that will soon glow under your eyes. There, I have a black snudge on my nose, and am in mourning for myself. Lay *your* nose, dearest, where mine has left the paper still warm. Your impressionable.

* * * *

GRACIOUS,—This is very sudden. Your dear letter says that I must understand we parted for ever last Tuesday at 3.30 P. M. Ah! these things should not be *written*. Come to me, come, and with your own lips repeat this remark; and then by that very act you will belie yourself with lovely perjury. I would say much more, but my pen, for the first time within my knowledge, refuses. This must show you how strangely I am your distraught.

* * * *

Of course, my Prince, if you *mean* it, I must release you. But nothing shall ever make me stop writing. Do not imagine me capable of such self-effacement. There is a big empty play-box upstairs, which I am having made into a dead-letter office. There will be pigeon-holes to take the little essays which, out of my great love for you, I

promise not to post. You are right in saying that I am the most generous woman you have ever met.

* * * *

GREAT HEART,—I would have you know that there are consolations. If you had let me marry you, as I have so consistently urged, that might have been the end of my love-letters. *Now* there is no limit set them but the grave. My pen was always jealous of your presence. *Now* it knows it is the dearest thing I ever grasp.

* * * *

I do not propose to outlive my happiness very long. And, indeed, my own mother died when I was seven. In one of my letters I told you my family was long-lived on both sides. This, of course, was not true; but I wrote it just after your mother had hinted that my “stock” was not very good stuff. Your sorry.

I seek in vain for help from the grief of poets. Words! words! a tagging of epitaphs that makes me sick. “*C'est aimer peu que de pouvoir dire combien l'on aime.*” And the same with sorrow, only more so. If

I thought that any eye but yours would penetrate the secret of my woe, I would destroy these letters *unwritten*; or else be more careful about the spelling of my Italian.

I cannot stain this paper with tears as I could have wished. Why will they not come at call, like ink? At each eyelid hangs one, but only semi-detached, like a Brixton villa. You see, I am not so sad but I can still compass some happy turn of thought like this. Your ever ingenious.

* * * *

BELOVED ORPHAN,—Light lie the earth on your mother's head. So short a while ago, and I would not have believed that I could one day hear of her death unmoved. Yet this morning, when the news came, I could not raise so much as a feeble smile. Well, she has had her will; and now she has "gone to her place"—not mine, let me trust. Dearest, you will never have another mother like her; nor I, it seems, a mother-in-law of any sort.

* * * *

DEAR ONLY READER (if any),— I was

born with a *penchant* for descriptive letters, and had I meant these for the public eye I should have made your personality shine more speakingly through them. How should the world know just what you are to me from a passing reference to your check riding-breeches and side-whiskers? And that is so long past. By now you must have replaced the one; and the other you may have shaved away in a paroxysm of regret.

I think I could have lost you almost cheerfully if I had only been told why. One of the saddest memories of my childhood (I was two at the time) is concerned with a tale my Nana told me, of a poor wronged woman—was she a Queen of Spain, or somebody in Tom Hood?—whose true love left her on a rumour that she had a wooden leg. She was condemned unheard, and the sentence was practically capital. Like me, she never even knew the charge against her; partly for the stringency of etiquette, and in part through the proper sensitiveness of her lover, who must, I think, a little have resembled you, beloved.

As a child—perhaps already nursing my

woman's seed of uncomplaining sorrow—the story touched me poignantly. Arthur, on the other hand, who also was present at its telling, has no memory of it. But then he was my junior, being barely out of long-clothes.

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MOST STOLID,—This is my last letter, positively. The doctors give me till to-morrow to break up. Are you interested to learn the cause? No? Then I must still tell you. *I am dying of Curiosity*. It is the woman's ruling passion—that, and love-letter-writing in my case—strong even to the death.

Many unsolicited answers to our conundrum—yours and mine, beloved, for all that is yours is mine—have been sent in to me by good-natured people, perfect strangers to me, most of them. One writes, quite gently, hazarding the theory that you were bored by me. Well-meant, but manifestly absurd. Another guesses that, suddenly, you have recognised your own mother's madness, and shrank from reproducing it. Some of these solutions are too paltry to

repeat; and one of them unmentionable on other grounds.

In my secret heart—it may have been through unconscious association with the story of the wooden leg—I half believe that when I called your attention, perhaps with too careless a pride, to the Norman tint in my veins, you gathered, from the eloquence of my love, that their blueness was really due to the presence of ink in my blood. Well, whatever—I would shed its last drop for you. Your always most effusive.

IV.

MR. HALL CAINE.

[*The Eternal City.*]

NOTE.—*The author, in attempting to follow Mr. Hall Caine in his latest flights of actuality, wishes to cast no sort of reflection upon any extant Monarch or Official of State whom he has found it convenient to introduce for the purposes of Art.*

IT was the dawn of a new century, practically contemporary with the present. By an edict of the young, pale King Epaminondas I., this unusual event was to be marked by the inauguration of a colossal scheme for restoring the Parthenon. A Jubilee Procession to the Acropolis had been arranged with a view of reviving the splendours of the ancient Panathenaic

festival. All Athens had been notified to attend.

In the great Square (*platcia*) of the Constitution a vast and motley crowd was assembled. Here was the Athenian Demos, ever ready, as in the days of the Christian Era, to see something new. Politicians of the café (*estiatoria*) might be seen sipping their sweet *masticha*, or munching Greekish delight (*glukumi*) inlaid with pistacchio nuts. In the midst of animated conversation they were telling the beads of their secular rosaries, as occupation for their restless hands. Here were shepherds from distant Nomarchies, Slavs from Boeotia, Roumanians from Acarnania, clad in capotes of goat's-hair, or red vests and baggy trousers, green and blue. Here were Albanian peasant-women in long shirts with broidered sleeves and leather girdle, and the glint of sequins in their hair. Here were local Demarchs swelling with importance; there a street Arab crying his *sigarocharto* (cigarette papers) at 25 *lepta*, or about 2¼*d.* the packet; or a newspaper-boy shouting *Ephemeris!* or *Astu!* (the names of party-

organs). There again was an archimandrite rubbing elbows with a parish Papa in his conical hat, long hair and dark gown; and, mixed with these, the foreign tourist, recognisable by his alien speech and appearance.

On the balcony of the Prime Minister's Palace, overlooking the Square of the Constitution, the flower of Athenian beauty and chivalry had gathered, along with the Ministers accredited from the various European Courts, the Vatican amongst them. They were greeting one another in terms of aristocratic familiarity, such as *Kale mera* (good day), or *yásson* (your health!). From group to group flitted the charming Princess Vevifwiski, a Russian blonde with cockatoo plumes rising from a Parisian toque, now tapping a General of Cavalry with her lorgnette, now ogling an attaché behind her fan. Scandal was the topic of the hour.

In an adjoining salon the Prime Minister, M. Rallipapia, having dismissed his Cabinet and the *corps diplomatique*, was now closeted with the heads of the Army, the Navy and the Auxiliary Forces, the Chief of Police,

the Mayors of Athens and the Piræus, the Directors of the Foreign Schools of Archæology, and the Commandante of the Fire Brigade. The face of the Premier, who was faultlessly dressed with a crimson peony in his button-hole, was that of a man habituated to command, and unscrupulous in the methods by which he attained his ends.

“You, gentlemen,” he said, turning to the Archæologists, “have guaranteed the stability of the ruins of the Acropolis during to-day’s ordeal, earthquakes excepted; I do not anticipate a *fracas* in any other quarter. But,”—and here he fixed a sombre eye upon the various officials grouped about him—“at the first sign of disturbance, I have only to fire the cannon on my Palace-roof, connected with my watch-fob by the Marconi system, and you will at once block the passes to Eleusis and Marathon, hock the horses in the *hipposiderodromi* (tramways), blow up the suburban lines, turn the municipal hose on to the main squares and streets, and arrest every one who cannot establish his identity by the name on his shirt-collar.”

“*Malista, Kyrie* (certainly, honoured

Sir)," replied the officials, as they bowed themselves out backwards.

Meanwhile, a thrill of tense expectation animated the brilliant company that thronged the reception rooms. Suddenly, up the stairs of Pentelican marble, ornamented with low prehistoric reliefs, came a penetrating whiff of ottar of patchouli, followed almost immediately by a full round figure, with a face radiant as a lark, and dewy as Aphrodite fresh-risen from the foam. Her smile, which embraced everybody, including perfect strangers, seemed to permeate her whole being, from the Gainsborough hat (with its wreath of natural edelweiss) to the astrachan gaiters, slashed with priceless ermine.

"Dearest Athena!" cried the Princess Vevifwiski, as her rouged lips imprinted a peck, soft as a dove's, and hypocritical as a hawk's, on the daffodil complexion of the full round beauty; "*mais, mon Dieu*, how ravishing a toilette, and what blooming cheeks!" She spoke in fluent French, the invariable medium of expression in the best court circles.

“Who is she?” asked the new English Minister, Lord Tiro, addressing himself to the Plenipotentiary Representative of the United States.

“My! Not to know her, Viscount, argues yourself unknown,” replied General Goatee. “Why, I guess she just walks around with the Prime Minister and runs this yere Government on her own. Pro-digious!”

“Ah!” said the English Minister, “she has a past. I saw that at a glance. But tell me, General, for I am fresh to the work, what is the nature of the ambitions that govern this ancient Hellenic race in regard to their political status?”

“Sir,” said the American, “I will figure it up for you right here. Ever since that Cretan business this one-horse Government has been afflicted with notions. They reckon to rejuvenate the Pan’lenic instinct, and start fair again with a slap-up new Parthenon. In view of the im’nent dissolution of the Turkish Empire, of which you, as a Britisher, may not have had any pre-monition, they are pegging out moral claims on a thickish slab of Thessaly. That’s so.”

"You astonish me," said the Viscount. "My Government has given me no information of this contingency. But I shall have my eyes open."

"A bright man, Sir, this Rallipapia, and no flies on him. Reads his Byron (not forgetting *Don Juan*, you bet!) and has military aspirations, *and* means to knock sparks out of the European concert; if only this all-fired Demos don't call his hand over the olive-tax."

"Ah! the People!" said the British Minister, pensively, "one has always to reckon with the People where there is a tradition of democracy."

The Jubilee Procession had begun. The van of the resplendent *cortége* had already traversed the Street of Hermes, wheeled by the Church of Kapnikarea, and debouched on the Square of the Temple of the Winds, heading for the sacred ascent of the Propylaea.

"Holy Martyrs!" cried Athena, as she leaned her full round shape over the balustrade, "what a picture! See the procession, how it unwinds its apparently interminable

coils amid the multitudinous populace, and bristles like a gigantic boa-constrictor threading the countless ripple of the jungle."

In another moment she had forgotten the sequence of her remarks in a delicious ecstasy of personal detail.

"There's a battalion of Euzoni!" she cried in childish glee, with a flash of her mulberry eyes. "Look at their Albanian uniform, with the fez, and the embroidered jacket with open sleeves, and the full white petticoat, or *fustanella*, and the red shoes turned up at the toes. That man with the grimy face is from the mines at Laurion, where they get from two to twenty pounds of silver for every ton of lead. And there's the dear Metropolitan himself in the funny high hat! Fancy their calling the Paris underground railway after him! And, oh, look! There's M. Zola, who writes novels. He's taking notes for a volume on Athens. And Mrs. Humphry Ward, too, on the same tack. And there's the famous Signorina Marie Corelli. That makes three. She comes from Stratford-on-the-Avon. Oh, yes, I was brought up in England. And,

talking of Stratford, if there isn't the blessed spook of Shakspeare! No, it isn't. It's the great Master, Hall Caine, with his nice little red Baedeker, and a green grammar of Modern Greek. He's going to out-Corelli the Signorina. *On dit*, there is no love lost there. And that makes four. All on the same tack. Why, no more English people need ever come to Athens. They can get it at the lending *bibliothekes*!"

Her brilliant flow of comment flooded the noontide air, heavy with the scent of honey wafted from the purple slopes of Hymettus. At her back there was that constant tittering and whispering behind fans which is *de rigueur* in the highest quarters. Aspasia and Pompadour were among the allusive names which passed from lip to lip.

"And where, I wonder, is my dear Anarchist, the Honorable Dotti? I know I shall lose my heart to him. And I want him so to sit as a model for Harmodius, or else Aristogeiton, who slew the tyrant. You know, of course," she cried, throwing a dazzling glance from her mulberry eyes upon the company, "that I have been asked

by the Board of Works to do a fresco for the wall-paper of the new Parthenon. You must all of you come to the private view." The invitation was received with well-simulated rapture. The Prime Minister had just entered, twirling his moustaches with a confident air of proprietorship.

A quivering vibration passed through the crowd below, as in a play just before the ghost comes on. This was followed by a muttering, vague as distant thunder, faintly audible as a tideless sea. All eyes were directed to a figure that was climbing up an electric lamp-post immediately under the balcony of the Premier's Palace. It was Deemster Dotti. His face was as green as an olive, yet as bold as a beacon.

"*Euphemeite, O politai!* Citizens, hush your tongues to holy silence!" he began in the formula familiar to all in whom flowed the blood of the old Athenian people. "I am not Demosthenes that I should declaim from the Pnyx; nor the Apostle that I should address you from the Areopagus: but the spirit of both still animates me even on this precarious point of vantage. Brothers,

we are to-day the victims of a cruel farce. Under the guise of restoring the fraternal beauty of an ancient Republic, the Government, ambitious of a higher place in the Councils of Europe, is but riveting more firmly the fetters about your patient necks."

Murmurs of dissent and approval floated up from the multitude. "*Kalo* (bravo!) "*Siga* (shut up!) " "Go it, cockey!"

"People of the Eternal City of the Violet Crown! It is a true Republic that we want to restore, the Republic of Manhood. We want no Kings, no Governments, no Army, no Navy, no Auxiliary Forces, no Fire Brigade! We want no Prime Minister sucking the people's veins while he toys with the tangles of a Phryne's locks!"

"Eu! eu!" "To the crows with him!" "Good old Dotti!"

"Yet let us not move through rapine and violence to noble ends. Let us simply express opinions. Let us convince by moral suasion. Let our motto be—*For Others! Everything for Everybody else!*"

The peroration, designedly conciliatory, was lost in the sudden roar of a cannon from

the Prime Minister's roof. This was followed by a terrific explosion on the down line of the Piræus railway. Fountains of red blood spurted from the flanks of their chargers as the mounted police bore down upon the crowd with fixed carbines. Honorable Dotti had raised his arm to implore the people not to resist, when a live jet of water from the municipal hose caught him full between the eyes, felling him to the foot of the lamp-post.

The brilliant gathering on the balcony had melted away like snow towards the back-door. As they streamed through the gorgeous saloons, tittering behind their fans, a quick ear might have overheard a ripple of the best society gossip. "Well, I never!" "Who'd have thought?" "What'll the boss do with it?" "That's one for the minx!"

As the curtain fell upon this first act of the modern Athenian drama, the full round form of Athena, her beauty strangely altered, was lying in the Cabinet Chamber prone across a despatch-box. The Prime Minister stood above her, still faultlessly

dressed and twirling the waxed ends of his inscrutable moustaches.

* * * *

The rays of the afternoon sun fell in rich blotches of golden glory on the walls of Athena's studio underneath the Hill of the Demi-Nymphs. Palette in hand, her prehensile fingers were rapidly blocking out in the plastic clay the features of the great Athenian Martyr. As the temperature of her feelings towards her model had moved up from the zero of hatred to the boiling point (80° Réaumur) of passionate worship, so the bust had successively represented Cleon (the brawling demagogue), Alcibiades, Herodotus, Themistocles, Aristides, and finally Socrates himself. The work, when accomplished, was to be a pleasant surprise for the model, who had always been looking the other way.

The door opened. "Honorable Dotti!" cried the butler, and withdrew without comment. The Deputy entered carrying a large *mpaoulo* (trunk) heavily padlocked. He gave a quiet sniff of satisfaction as he recognised the familiar perfume of patchouli.

Then silently, as if by the force of a habit which he was powerless to arrest, he stepped to the throne, wrought of Parian marble and draped with Phœnician *byssos* (a kind of linen, not so diaphanous as Coan silk) and assumed a bust-like attitude with his back to the artist. There was an expression on his face. It was the spirit of outraged Justice. The atmosphere of the studio tingled with suppressed passion. As the salient features of Socrates leaped into actuality under her rapid touch, it seemed to Athena that she could not resist the impulse to infuse some of her own superfluous warmth into the lifeless clay. Furtively she kissed the Martyr's clammy nose. It was the connubial instinct. For the moment she was playing the part of Xantippe.

The silence was broken by Dotti's voice, the relic of a noble organ ruined by the practice of addressing outdoor crowds in the teeth of a brutal constabulary.

"Athena," he said, "my soul has learned to trust in your discretion and the purity of your motives ever since that hour in my bachelor attic when you introduced yourself

to me in an evening dress that displayed the full round ripeness of your youth and beauty. I will now proceed to read aloud to you a little thing of my own composition. It is the draft of a poster giving instructions to the Great Over-taxed how to behave at our mass-meeting to-morrow night under the columns of Zeus Olympios. For days they have been coming in from far and near; not only from Attica and the Peloponnese, but from the uttermost isles of the Archipelago. I ought, perhaps, to say that the splendid paradox of the opening sentence is taken verbatim from the pen of the Master. I have printed the passage in small caps."

"Go on, Daniel Dotti," said Athena. "My heart is with you. But don't look round."

The Deputy took a long breath and began. Never had his face so closely resembled the Bust as at this moment.

"*Friends, Athenians, Countrymen! THE SKY IS DARK, THE HEAVENS ARE VOID, WE ARE TRAVELLING BENEATH THE STORM-CLOUD. Yet it has the customary silver lining. It is the dawn of the Milky Way,*

though still no bigger than a man's hand. Come, then, to the Olympieion in your myriads, leaving behind your poniards and shot-guns. Let each man wear his own hair with a simple branch of olive twined about it. It shall be at once a symbol of Peace, and a protest against the olive-tax. Do not provoke violence. The hired soldiers, themselves your down-trodden brothers, would be reluctantly tempted to retaliate. Do nothing, or you will surely be done by. Simply assemble and talk. Better still, just listen to me. Respect property. Pay honour to vested interests. Remember Thermopylæ! Remember Salamis! To-morrow after dark; say about 8.30. DANIEL DOTTI."

"Beautiful, isn't it?" cried Athena. "And now tell me something about your past. I feel I must have met you in another and a better world." There was a passionate appeal in her mulberry eyes. "My child," enquired Dotti, "are you strong enough to bear the truth?" "Try me," she said. With that, having drawn down the blinds, he extracted from the trunk a phono-cine-mato-biograph with oxy-hydrogen lantern

complete. Fixing them in position, he cleared his throat and started:—

“Constantly harried by the police in my capacity of Friend of Man, yet never, even in my most rapid movements—even when my very boots were an impediment—have I consented to part with this ingeniously complicated instrument, my sole memento of the noblest Exile I ever clapped eyes on.”

Athena’s attention had now become seriously diverted from the Bust.

“The victim of his virtues, he was placed in what is invariably known as *domicilio coatto* (confinement) on a sea-bound island. There, loaded with chains, and guarded day and night by heavy dragoons with drawn sabres, he ultimately perished. *That man was your father!*”

Athena’s palette fell from her nerveless grasp.

“I now turn on the gas, and both the dead and the dead-alive will appear. The scene before you represents Trafalgar Square. Victorious troops from Egypt are marching by. They have just detrained at Charing Cross. I suppose they must have

come overland as far as Calais or Boulogne. You will notice the Exiled Philanthropist with a bright little girl and a handsome Greek boy, the latter holding a stuffed squirrel on wheels by a string."

A sudden tremor passed through Athena's limbs. It shook her easel, displacing the Bust, which fell nose-downwards with a thud to the floor. Where it fell, there it stuck.

"The Philanthropist addresses the boy. 'Daniel Leonidas,' he says, 'listen to the band!' The drums and fifes are passing; they are playing *The Girl I left behind me!* The little maid is speaking to the Philanthropist. 'Papa,' she asks, 'is dey playing *Kingum tum?*'"

Athena's knees were going under her. She sank down uneasily on the moist clay of the prostrate *chef d'œuvre*.

"I never rightly understood," continued Dotti, "why she could manage the guttural in the word *Kingdom*, and yet failed to pronounce it in the word *come*. But let that pass. Now the gentleman hails a four-wheeler. 'Soho!' he cries. 'What ho!'

answers the cabman. 'So-ho!' replies the Exile with grave courtesy."

Athena could bear no more. "But surely," she cried, "my father never made a joke?"

"Not consciously," replied Dotti. "I learned much from him in that respect. I owe him a great debt."

"But who is the little Leonidas in the picture?"

"*Ego o idios* (I myself)! Dotti is an *alias*."

"Never mind, dear," cried Athena. "To me, whatever your real name, you will never be anything but dotty!" She smiled shyly at her own wit, and flung herself upon his answering chest.

* * * *

DEAREST HUSBAND,—For are we not man and wife in all except actual fact?—Ever since you left me at the church-door at 4 A.M. this morning in a red wig and top-boots, so as to elude the cordon of detectives, I have been wondering what you had for breakfast. I say to myself, "Why does he hold such perilous opinions?" And then I

remember that I have promised to be your true little help-meet.

All the police are asking one another "Have you seen Honorable Dotti?" The crowds are restive and want to go home. Throughout the night the troops were raking them with shot and shell; but the list of casualties is smaller than we anticipated. One milch-goat from the Stadion killed by a 15-pounder, and a Member of the *Boule* (Parliament) bitten by a stray dog in the Street of Victory.

Your loving ATHENA.

* * * *

MY DEAR DANIEL DOTTI,—Of course it is splendid having love-letter after love-letter from you, full of such beautiful language about the Republic of Man, and telling me how you have got the greater part of Europe to agree with you. But I was a little jealous of the Parisian ladies. I feel happier now you are in Berlin. I have had all your placards put up; and, as you must have foreseen, am soon going to prison for it. I am dying to have you back; but still, don't you think that Athens may be a little warm for

you? You see, it is only quite a short time since you left, and some of the detectives remember names and faces so curiously well. Or, are you coming back in the red wig and a new *nom de guerre*? I feel so excited.

Your faithful little Wife.

* * * *

“Dearest,” said Athena, as she lay limply in Dotti’s arms, “I am so glad that I lived long enough to see your hour of triumph, and share your joy at the Abolition of Hierarchies. How our poor human methods are but as clay or plasticene in the hands of a Higher Destiny! You hoped to attain your end by peaceful means. I dare not think how long this might have taken. But now you have succeeded in a moment by the simple murder of a Prime Minister—no, no, dearest. I know it was only manslaughter——”

“Athena!” cried Dotti, hoarsely, “do not mention it. Have I not abjured the guerdon of that—of that regrettable incident? Elected this day to the Presidency of the New Republic, my motto is still *Every-*

thing for Everybody else. As usual, I efface myself."

EPILOGUE.

It was a summer evening. Kaspari's work was done. Beside his cottage door, on the hills above Megara, the fine old shepherd was sitting in the sun. He had just returned from Athens, after a one-day excursion.

"Papóús! (grandpapa)," cried little Petrokinos, "what is that you have in your pocket, so large and smooth and round?"

"My child," replied Kaspari, "'tis a present from Athens for a good boy. 'Tis a bit of the Bust of the great Dotti!"

With that he drew forth a cast of the lately-discovered fragment of a portrait head which that day had been set up, to the accompaniment of the massed bands of all available Brotherhoods, on the tomb of Athena in the Potters' Quarter (Kerameikos).

"Who was Dotti, grandpapa?"

"Dotti, my boy? why that's ages ago, back in the early part of the twentieth century, before they did away with Kings and

Boundaries, and such-like relics of barbarism."

"Is it a pretty story, grandpapa?" asked the boy wistfully.

"That's a matter of taste, my child," replied the old man; "but I know it's a d——d long one."

VI.

MISS MARIE CORELLI.

[*Choice Sayings.*]

SURELY there is Something, if we could but find out what it is. O unfathomable deeps!

* * * *

Each of our actions, however seemingly trivial, is a link in the chain of moral and physical evolution. Try to rise from your bed without having first lain down, and you will discover, all too late, how indispensable is the value of the missing link.

* * * *

Methinks that we whom the gods hold dear are not the last to die. And what, indeed, were their immortal existence if reft of love? 'Twere as a *Hamlet*-play without the essential pervading Spirit.

* * * *

Man glories in titles. A woman is content with Genius.

* * * *

What is this tiny terrestrial ball as compared with the vast invisible Universe? It is a mote, a bubble, a gnat in the Great Inane.

* * * *

Oggi! Oggi! cry the ice-cream wayfarers from far Campanian hills. To-day! To-day! How true! There is no time precisely like the present. The past is over; the future yet to be.

* * * *

It is the curse of existence that we are compelled to keep silence. The heart's blood pulses, yet we must hide it from the crowd. So great is the numbing, stifling influence of convention. How seldom can we be ourselves!

* * * *

What is the Good? And what is the Beautiful? Who can say? All we know is that both terms are synonymous, the one quite as much as the other.

* * * *

Science is but the confession of man's ignorance. Art, with a few exceptions, is the effort of woman, everywhere clogged and thwarted, to express herself.

* * * *

The mighty Ocean may run dry in the far-off to-be; but the welling tears of Beelzebub flow on for ever.

* * * *

If we could only understand all mysteries, then the Ultimate Cause would become plain to the intelligence of the meanest critic.

* * * *

We are as swimmers, cast upon the dilemma-horns of two swift currents. Each stroke for the True bears us upward and onward; each surmounted rung of the ladder makes the next but easier, especially if we bear others with us.

* * * *

Is there not in us women an infinite capacity for the Transcendent? Touch that slumbering molecule with the right spark, and a heavenly flame shoots up, beaconing the mariner to port.

* * * *

What is it, that ethereal essence which permeates our mortal frame to the fingertips, and colours our daily existence as with rainbow-hues? Is it a conundrum? Go to! Know thyself!

* * * *

It is not the frank, glaring vulgarity of the masses which sets a furrowed frown upon the stern forehead of the Thinker. Rather it is the enervating Hedonism of the epicurean aristocrat, that insidious poison which slowly undermines society. A degenerate world, my masters!

* * * *

When woman rises to her true stature, and shakes off the strangulation-gripe of the harem, she is said to be "unsexed."

* * * *

What avails it to throw the jewels of Genius to a swinish public, when the afore-said herd loves best to wallow in an *olla-podrida* of filthy rags?

* * * *

The age is *ennuyé*. It has grown tired of the wise, pure, poetic ideals of Greece and Rome. The day-dreams of a Sapho or a

Juvenal are accounted less *piquant* than the ugly facts of an Old Kent Road. Who was it that said, *O Tempora?* and, again, *O Mores?*

* * * *

Nous avons soif! It is the cry of humanity peering into the unsearchable wells of Truth. "Who, who," it asks, like the Danaids of yore, "has put a rift within the bucket? We would drink! *Nous avons soif!*"

* * * *

What is criticism? It is the earth-serpent Jealousy, that goes upon its belly, leaving a slimy trail upon the springing Tree of Knowledge to which it may never hope to climb.

* * * *

What a terrible gift is this of unerring insight! To read Sham at a glance: to dive beneath the white-wash of Superficiality: to recognise, as the outside critic never can, the limits of one's own creations; all this is to feel the exquisite torture of an archangel temporarily confined in an earthly pig-sty.

* * * *

Noël! What thoughts, what emotions the little word awakes! It is the French for Christmas!

* * * *

Listen, I say, to the pure, sweet, passionate idylls of the birds! Is there not a tacit reproach in the lyric of the lark? Does not the pæan of the bull-finch make you blush? They do not throttle one another in a sordid struggle on the Stock Exchange; or mar the beauty of creation with petty theories of Science, so-called.

* * * *

You ask me why I am so modest. No great Artist regards her work as her own. She is but the inspired medium. And when her labour attains fruition it passes from her possession and becomes the heritage of all time. She may admire it with whole heart; but only as one of the crowd, the unnumbered atoms of humanity.

* * * *

A dog has more honesty and good faith than a man. That is why we pay an annual penalty for keeping dogs. Yet you may shelter a man-tyrant under your roof, and

pay nothing for the privilege, except in hot, indignant tears, wrung from you by vile oppression and the viler counterfeit of love.

* * * *

The year, not less than the month, the week, the day, must eventually pass and be no more. The Temporal can never outlive the Eternal.

VII.

MR. DOOLEY.

[*Period: August, 1900.*]

“ I HEAR-R they’s a gr-reat chanst iv a Gin’ral Diss’lution if th’ weath’r on’y kapes on,” says th’ Sicrety iv th’ Lib’ral Cork’s, in conf’rence with th’ Cla-ark iv th’ Meech’-rollogy Departmint. “ They was a platf’m onst again th’ war-r, but’ tis broke,” says he, “ an’ th’ Lib’ral Parthy’s f’r paintin’ itsilf thrue kha-arky. Ivery candydate’s got t’ be a sojer or a sailor or a war-r cor-r’spondhunt or ilse a horsp’t’l ordherly,” says he. Cap. Lambd’h’n’s r-runnin’ f’r Newcastle on th’ Dinmycratic tick’t; an’ th’ champeen Baden Pole ’ll swape th’ boord at Hyde Park Cor-rner, th’ hotbed iv th’ ray-acshun’ry il’ment,” says he; “ onless he furrst ascinds to th’ House iv Payrs,” says he. “ Th’ ole counthry ’ll be recrooted fr’m th’ Mull’gan

Gyards, an' th' iliction expinses paid be a sprinklin' iv pathrites fr'm th' Ph'lippeens. 'Tis pity th't th' wan Lib'ral Mimber at th' Front 's pr'vinted fr'm attindin' be th' call iv jooty," says he. "I dinnaw what 'll be th' price iv a loan iv a Lion's Skin or a Rid Insign, but they'se a tur-rble sthrain on th' ma-ark't alriddy, an' th' German houses onable t' ex'cute fur-rther ordhers f'r th' prisint," says he.

* * * *

"An' what 'll be th' name iv ye'er new wather-choobe boilers?" says th' Pos'-masth'r-Gin'ral.

"Bellvill," says th' Fur-rst Lord iv th' Adm'r-lty.

"An' a fine proshpect f'r th' public," says Lond'ndherry, "if they'se annything in a name," says he.

"An' what might be th' addhriss iv ye'er new sorthin' off'ce," says Mr. Goosh'n.

"Mount Plisant," says Lond'ndherry.

"'Tis another fine proshpect f'r th' public," says Mr. Goosh'n.

* * * *

"I'll not have conscr-ription," says th'

Undher Sicroty iv War-r. "'Tis a free counthry," says he, "an' not wan iv thim slave-dhrivin' European monno-polies," says he. "It 's mesilf th't 's all f'r kindness an' th' Volunth'ry systh'm," he says. "They'se a power iv good Threes'ry goold been squandhered on th' Orxill'ry For-rces, an' they done splendid," says he. "But it's mighty onconvenient f'r th' Sthrateejans not t' know what la-ads they have t' dipind upon t' fight f'r th' flag again th' naygers," says he, "whin th' squaze comes all iv a suddint," says he. "I'd have voluntheerin' made com-puls'ry, same 's th' Rig'lars; so's ye may know whar y' ar-re," says he. "It'd be conthrairy t' th' undherlyin' princ'ples iv th' sarv'ce," says Mr. Arn'l' Forsth'r. "An' a sop t' Cerbeerius," says Sorr Hinnery, "t' give thim th' chanst t' clane the'er dirthy lin'n in privat," says he. "If I'd on'y known," says th' Undher Sicroty iv War-r, "th't me proposh'l 'd cause offince, I'd 've dhropped it b'fore I took it up," says he. An' he dhropped it.

* * * *

"I'll not intertain th' disthressfull dilly-

gates on mass," says th' Chairm'n iv th' Gr-reat Easth'n Comp'ny. "Lave thim come be twos an' threes," says he, "an' I'll dish-coorse with thim sip'rate," says he. "'Tis a livin' wage they'se shtrikin' for, is it? An' how manny times will I till ye th't th' livin' wage 's not th' consarn iv th' Comp'ny, nor th' gin'ral con-vanience iv the public nayther," says he; "it's th' inthrests iv th' div'dhends," says he, "same's a Sugar Thrust. They'se some 'd have us ray-form th' thrack," says he, "an' clane out th' ca-ars, an' mop up th' dirt iv Fenchurch St. Depot, an' sim'lar couns'ls iv per-fiction. What nixt?" says he.

* * * *

"Were ye iver in a sha-am fight 't Alder-shot?" says I, t' a Corp'ral iv th' Inn'skillin's fr'm th' front.

"I was," says he.

"An' does 't bear anny ray-sim-blance to th' field iv ca-arnage?" says I.

"Savin' thransp't an' th' sunsthroke, it does not," says he.

"Do they dhress y' up f'r it?" says I.

"In invis'ble rid," says he.

“An’ do they not larn ye to take cover?” says I.

“’Twud be playin’ hide-’n-sake on a goluf green,” says he.

“An’ is they niver an ambushcade?” says I.

“Divvle a wan,” says he, “with both parthies knowin’ ivery inch iv th’ ground be hear-rt, an’ th’ nixt move rig’lated be th’ Gover’mint rools,” says he.

“Have y’ no wurrud iv difinse f’r th’ systh’m?” says I.

“’Tis a gr-rand thrainin’ f’r bein’ kilt,” says he. “Thrue f’r ye, they’s not anny better matarial th’n th’ British inf’nthry be rayson iv the-er cour’ge an’ dog-headness; but ’tis th’ instruccion th’t makes thim th’ finest ta-arg’t in th’ wurruld,” says he.

* * * *

“Have ye anny notion iv th’ Far-r Easth’n question,” says O’Leary.

“I have,” says I; “but ’tis inthr’cate. Fur-rst, ye see, they’s th’ Boxers. Thim ’s pathrites,” says I, “same’s th’ Moon-lighthers; an’ be that token th’ Chiny Gover’mint ’s again thim, and thrates thim ’s

in'mies. But they'se both again th' furrin divvles, an' 'tis why th' Chiny Gover'mint thrates thim 's frinds. An' th' 'lied Powers 're frinds with th' Chiny Gover'mint whin it 's again th' pathrites; an' in'mies whin it 's not again thim; an' 'twud shoot th' Powers fine t' be frinds again th' common in'my," says I, "if on'y they wasn't nath'ral-bor-ru in'mies iv wan another fr'm th' commence-mint," says I. "Ye follow me argyments?" says I.

"I do," says he; "an' the poor down-throdden crayther has me throe symp'thy."

"Who's that?" says I.

"Th' Sult'n, iv coorse," says he.

VIII.

MR. HENRY HARLAND.

[*The Cardinal's Snuff-box.*]

FOR the garden of a chalet, picked up on the word of a bailiff's advertisement, with never an asterisk in Baedeker to guarantee the *Aussicht*, it was not so bad a spot to drink beer in under a July sun, very aperitive to the pores.

At Peter's feet swept the Rhine in a swirling rush of molten lead, gathering speed, compressing its flanks, for the rapids below Lauffenburg. Across the river, beyond the feathery slopes of the castle-grounds, the forest uplands of Baden stretched, ridge above ridge of pine, oak, larch, northwards to the bastioned heights of Menzenschwand, vague, symbolic, impalpable on the horizon's verge.

A schoolboy memory of the Muse beat

importunate on his brain. "Positively," he thought, "what with the river, the lawns, the pines, and a fair substitute for topmost Gargarus, the scene might be sitting for a photogravure illustration of *Ænone*. Not, of course, a perfect analogy. Thus, the Rhine at this stage is somewhat bulky for the exercise of 'falling through the clov'n ravine in cataract after cataract——' "

But he had only got as far as the second cataract, when—"You find the view a touch too chromographic?" The voice was female, but of a fine distinction, of a full, rich, contralto resonance, to rival the roar of the intervening flood.

Involuntarily Peter rose and bowed to the opposite bank. A lovely phantom met his glance, clear-cut, crisp-edged, dazzling white against the peacock-green of her environment. For a brief minute, crowded with dim recognition, incredulity, triumphant assurance, Peter was beside himself, and neither of him could find an answer to the lady's preamble. Oh, but with good excuse, for was not this her first word with Peter? Thus far, he had only seen her in public at

varying distances, had had no speech of her, had just surmised her enough to make her the heroine of his novel.

"You find it somewhat arranged, crude, obvious?" she asked in English; oh, yes, in quite good English.

"On the contrary, I had pronounced it a Tennysonian harmony." Peter spoke with an outward *aplomb*; but his heart was beating just anywhere between his boots and his Homburg hat.

"Ah, yes," she said, "you allude to *Ænone*. An admirable classic." Her manner, as if inured to dialectic, might have confessed her a Girtonian, but for a something, an I-know-not-what of banter in her left eyelid, scarce perceptible across the estranging river.

"I admit the analogy to be imperfect," replied Peter.

"By the way," she said, "I hope that the chalet answers fairly to the terms of my advertisement; that you don't think the photographs were cooked." Again, the slight depression of the azure-veined left lid. Then, with a valedictory bow and in the easiest

possible manner—"Please let me know if the drains go wrong. Good evening."

"An adorable creature," he reflected, as the crisp-edged vision of whiteness vanished up the lawns. "What a nerve, what intuition, what *femininity!*"

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"Will the High-born have yet another beer?" It was the Swiss maid, waisted like a young cedar, stolidly flamboyant in her local finery.

"Gretchen," answered Peter abstractedly in English, "to cite the words of our late immortal laureate, on whom we have already touched allusively, 'the truth, that flies the flowing can, will haunt the vacant cup.' At present I shrink from truth; I would soar on the pinions of Daedalean presumption. You do not chance to keep any hashish on the premises?"

"*Bitte, mein Herr?*"

"*Ja wohl, noch ein Glas Bier.* And, Gretchen," he continued in the vernacular, "tell me who lives opposite."

"The noblest Sir does not know? It is Her Serene Widowhood, the Herzogin von Basel-Basel."

"Her Widowhood!" murmured Peter, greatly relieved.

"Her *Serene* Widowhood," Gretchen corrected.

"Implying a superiority to the need of consolation?" asked Peter.

"*Bitte?*"

"Yes, yes, more beer, Gretchen; do not hesitate to bring me more beer."

* * * *

Ten days later Peter sat in the garden trying vainly to make copy out of his despair. Behind him swept the Rhine in a swirling rush of molten lead, gathering speed, compressing its flanks, for the narrows below the village. An agitated dachshund was tracking water-vermin with plaintive whines.

"Is the dog attached to you?" The voice was female, but of a fine distinction, of a rich, ripe, contralto resonance, transilient across the roar of the river.

Peter started to his feet. His heart was still volatile; but this time he was more prepared, composed, alert. "In the absence of other diversions, he consents to be aware of my propinquity," he replied. "But for the moment he is preying upon his fellow-brute."

"An illustration of the universal law of Nature?" she asked, with an air of serious detachment. But there was a something, an I-really-hardly-know-what of badinage in her smile.

"So careful of the type, so careless of the single life," replied Peter. Loverlike, he was eager to improve the occasion, to expand himself in the profundities of dogma.

"Have you observed," he continued, "that in this incessant war of pursuer and pursued, the nobler the nature of the animal the greater the modification he undergoes by his ignoble employ? The rat himself pursues a yet inferior class of vermin, and in the process becomes but negligibly deformed. The dachshund, on the other hand, degenerates into a mere abortion, a caricature of a dog. Is not here a premonitory warning for

the highest form of Nature—I refer to Humanity?”

“Oh,” she said, “you are much, much too clever for me. But I am nothing if not a child of Nature; so I shall harden my heart and go on ‘still achieving, still pursuing.’ Some people like being pursued, is it not so?” And on the word she had withdrawn before Peter’s density could compose a pertinent retort.

“What a nerve,” he mused, “what intuition, what *Weiblichkeit!*”

* * * *

The first touch of autumn was on the valley, as Peter crossed the castle-lawns to take his last leave of the Herzogin. Her creed he might have contrived to adopt, but there was no getting over this eternal offence of her title and her wealth. The lady was above him and away. It was the old tale of Queen Kate of Cornaro and the page-boy, that “pined for the grace of her so far above his power of doing good to.”

As for the view, its general features were

practically unchanged. Beyond the feathery slopes of the castle-grounds the great forest uplands of Baden stretched, ridge above ridge of pine, larch, oak, northwards to the bastioned heights, &c.

A schoolboy memory of the Muse beat importunate upon his brain. "Positively," he thought, "what with the river, the lawns, the pines, and the best of substitutes for topmost Gargarus" (*repeat, as above, down to the words, "cataract after cataract"*)——

But he had only got as far as the second "cataract," when—— "You find the view a touch too chromographic?"

Peter started and bowed to a gracious phantom of whiteness, crisp-cut, clean-edged, on a rustic seat. His heart was beating just anywhere between his boots and his Homburg hat. Oh, but with good excuse, for Peter was in love, but very very much in love.

"You find it somewhat arranged, crude, obvious?" she asked.

"On the contrary I had pronounced it a Tennysonian harmony."

"Ah, yes," she said, "you allude to

Ænone. An admirable classic." Her manner, as if inured to dialectic, might have confessed her a Girtonian. But there was a something, &c.

"I admit the analogy to be imperfect," replied Peter.

"Your dog is still attached to you?" She pointed with quick spontaneity to the agitated dachshund pursuing imaginary game in the shrubbery.

"In the absence of other diversions, yes. But for the moment he preys upon his fellow-brute."

"An illustration of the universal law of Nature? No, please," she added, as Peter was in act to take up his cue; "I cannot bear any more of it. Let us try a new conversation. What are you carrying there?"

"I am restoring to the Bishop his latch-key. He dropped it," said Peter, sheepishly.

"Not *again!*" she said; "how unoriginal of him! By-the-by, is your new novel finished?"

"My new novel!" he cried, aghast.
"Who told you that I write novels?"

"But you must have known that I knew.

No author ever hid his profession under a bushel for a week together. And, being an author on a holiday, you would never think of missing such a chance of copy. What are you going to call this account of your latest experiences?"

"I am calling it *The Bishop's Latchkey*," said Peter, without conviction. "It sounds so alluring. That's why I keep carrying the thing about. I have to drag it into the picture somehow."

"I think, out of courtesy, you might give up that title, and call the book after me. I must be more important than the latch-key. But I'm afraid the *Indiscretion of the Duchess* has been used already." There was a something in her manner—could it have been the very least little depression of the azure-veined left lid?—that suddenly emboldened Peter. For the time being she lent him her eyes, to see things by as she saw them.

"Certainly," he replied; "I will drop my title and take your name instead, on the understanding that you, for your part——"

"That I, for my part, drop *my* title and

take *your* name instead? ” she asked, with a very pleasant frankness.

“ Precisely,” he said.

“ Oh, very well,” said she.

IX.

MR. MAURICE HEWLETT.

Now to the lieges of his Suzerain Lady came challenge of tourney from Oom of the Doppers, Lord of Outrevalles. And Rougegarde the trobador smote on his tambour and made a Chanson des Pauvres Diables Distractz. And the lists were straightly set in Val de Long-Tomps. And the hollow plain was ribbed with naked rocks, grey kopjes crowning all. And from the borders of Our Lady of the Snows, and from Isles of the Southern Cross, flew winged proffers of vassal service, and the cry of knighthood calling to saddle and spur. And it was really rather curious. For My Lord Red-Tape, out of his great knowledge of warlike matters, made retort courteous, saying, "Oy deus! what should we with horse? Send us foot!"

But by force of whelming numbers and a stubborn hardihood begot of British beef,

they overbore no few of the chivalry of Oom; and some they made captive before ever they could mount and invite the hills to cover them. Thereupon a remnant of England's knighthood, composite of the heavy sort and such as go in housings of blue (for a sprinkling of actual horsemen had joined issue with the foe in the *mêlée*), made their ways homeward. And Le Sieur Bobs de Kandahar, holding that the tourney was accomplished, himself took ship whence he came. At this the heathen, emerging from their *parole* or other sanctuary, rallied for the onset; and they swept the lists like an Egypt's plague of locusts. And about the time of the seventeenth moon (shaped sickle-wise for sign of a bloody aftermath) the new Lord Red-Tape (for the former had been lifted nigher the throne as one that had the French speech most nimble on his tongue) woke from a drugged sleep on a cry of danger, calling "To horse! A crown a day, and d——n the expense!" So, the traverse being a windy matter at this season, there was mounting in red haste against the second anniversary of the tourney.

But about this time Sir Howard, Lord Duke of the North-folk, that hitherto had been disposed to cloistral habitudes, sat mightily in the public eye. For being Chief Butler of England (by grace of birth) and also Comptroller of Letter-bags (by grace of sheer desert) he was minded to yield up this last dignity, the better to expedite him for battle against the heathen; of so galliard a stock of chivalers was his tree compact. So in harness of the wan leopard's hue he sailed south by east. And under a blistering noon, very noxious to parched maws, he pricking against the enemy (that had no heart to wait his advent), and crying "Ha! Maltravers! Sauve Arundel!" his palfrey avoided from under him. But being recovered of this hurt, he made dedication of his knightly spurs to Saint Michael of Table Bay, and so home without more ado.

And now you shall hear how he must needs make his peace with Monsignor the Pope, that had looked askance on this crusade and withheld blessing from my Lord Duke's emprise. So in palmer's sable he made haste to Rome with a great following

of pelegrians, and there he gat himself mis-liked as one that was loud to have His Holiness restored to temporal thrones; and brought the Quirinal about his ears; and so home again, protesting fair intent.

And as soon as he had done off his pilgrim's weeds he must go accoutred *cap-à-pie* in his panoply of Earl Marshal (likewise by grace of birth) for proclaiming of the new King. And not a blazoned herald of them all that could move without his nod. And it was matter for mere marvel how one mortal could be so innumerably gifted. But thereafter he gat him much new lore of antic precedence against the King's crowning.

* * * *

Now so it was that the chivalry of England, they alone, took shame of being seen abroad in fighting-gear, whether as being too proud to air the ensigns of their pride, or for modesty, lest in so salient a flame the hearts of ladies errant might be as night-moths scorched against their will—I may conjecture, not determine. But Le Sieur Bobs de Kandahar sent word that he would have his

knighthood eschew mufti (an unchristian word, filched, as you should know, from unblooded law-givers of Byzant) and come before him in armour *point-de-vise*. And this was but as a tucket to prelude the shock of battle. For my Lord Bobs had laid his *bâton* in rest against the Empery of Red Tape. And it was no madrigal business; but a task such as had Duke Hercules of pleasant renown when he laid his besom about the middens of the old Man of the Stables (*Vetus de Stabulis*).

* * * *

But scarce it wanted a se'nnight to the eve of Monsire Valentine when the *arrière-ban* outflow for summons to a serry of knights at the High Court of Parliament. And of those that sent it forth Sir Belchamp Portedrapeau was one; he that was named Fore-and-Aft by his own; for that he sat with portions of him overlapping the fence, this way and that way.

“Saint Lloyd-George for Little England!” came answer from the Welsh Marshes.

And “Dame!” cried Jehan of Montrose,

that, save under great provoking, used but sparsely the language of piety; "and must I quit my inkhorn for yon chattering parrot-house?"

"Stone of Rufus!" cried Sir Vernon de Chastel-la-Forest, surnamed Le Pompous for a touch of the mammoth in his motion; a born trampler of men; "Stone of Rufus!" says he, "but I scent budget-work afoot!" And so snorted joyfully.

"Great Glamis!" said the Thane of Fife (E. Division), "I am the Empire's, let her make what wars she will. That first; then give me Holy Church to harry!"

"King's man!" cried Sir Cop-la-Poule; "and sib with you there, both ways!"

But "By the Mace!" said La Bouchere of the Cordonniers, "there should be noses broke among the faithful. 'Tis like to be a most amazing pretty medley."

* * * *

Now, as the city waxed monstrous fruitful, but the highways abode as they were, save for yawning breaches in the floor thereof very unseasonable, you will collect

that the press of passengers, horse and foot, grew like to a hustle of pilchards pell-mell in a Brittany drag-net. And the town-watch gave admonishment, crying "Passavant! passavant!" or "Halte-là!" as the case demanded. And the driver of the all-folks-wain would turn to his rearguard and "Lord Mayor ha' mercy," he would say, "'tis a mazy faring!" And, "Ay, mate, a bit thick!" his fellow; and so would troll a snatch of *Adhæsi pavimento*.

But for relief of the pent roads there was devised a hollow mine-way, such as coneys affect; and engines, fitted thereto, to draw men through the midriff of earth, betwixt its crust and fiery omphalode. And it was named Le Tube à Deux Deniers; for, fared they never so far, serf or margrave, difference of price or person was there none. But against the Company of Adventurers that wrought the same was plaint made of flacking walls, and a volleying of roof-beams, and basements rent as with a mangonel. And "Tush!" says the Company. But, "Oy, sires!" cried the dwellers overhead, "let the chose be '*jugée!*'" And so haled them

before the Shire-reeve's Court, for mulct and amercement.

* * * *

Now at the very sable of fog-tide you must understand that they play Moralities on the dun banks of Thames. And of such are the moving histories of *Sir Richard de Whittingtoun*, *La Belle Dormeuse*, *Damosel Rouge-Cape*, *The Forest Infants*, *Mistress Cendrillon* (called *Cinderella of the Fur Slipper*, though certain lack-lores would have her shod not in *vair*, which is to say *fur*, but *verre*, namely glass), *Jacques Mort-au-Géant* and *Aladdin of the Lamp Merveilleux* (out of Araby). Follows a sample or so in this kind:—

(i) Whether it was the red wine, or the splitting of crackers, or else her cinder-hot beauty, I know not, that set the Prince's heart on sudden fire. Certes, he caught her to his knee in the eyes of all the gaping meinie.

"Vair-slipper," he cried, "your little foot is on my neck; your slave am I already. Make me your Prince!"

"Lord, say not that," said Mistress Cen-

drillon. Ashen were her cheeks against the blue flame of her hair. Twice round her brows it went, and the pigtail's ending slept between her breasts. "Lord," says she, "it can never be. The humming-bird may not mate with the titmouse."

"By my halidom," he cried, "but it shall be so, *ma mye*."

"Lord!" she murmured, "the hour is close on middle night; let me away!"

She slipped like green water from his rocky arms. "Nay, popinjay," he cried, "it is the hour of Philomel. Stay with me till she withdraw before the early throistle."

For all answer, light as a beam of Dian she slid down the bannisters and so past the drowsy cloak-room sentinels. Midnight carillon, pealing from a hundred belfries, snapped the wand of faërie. Into the sheer starlight flitted the shadow of a homing wench, clad in most pitiful poor gear. My Lord Prince, hot in pursuit, stood rooted to earth, chanting a forlorn stave of *Le Trésor des Humbles*. Against the nap of his sapphire vest he held a Slipper of Vair chance-dropped in the princely purlieus.

(ii) Young Spring was waking in the high woods. Now was the pairing-time of amorous fowls in burgeoned brakes. Earth turned in her sleep with a throb of surging sap. Lush hyacinths spread a gossamer web to veil her bridals. Hand in hand, as became orphans of one ravaged house, the Forest Infants paced under boon boughs.

"Parbleu," said Fulk, that was right heir of this goodly demesne, "but I have an aching maw!"

"And I," said his sister Alys, "I also could do with a devilled ortolan."

"'Tis a dog of an uncle!" said Fulk, with a round oath that your Gascon trooper might repeat, not I.

"And the aunt a vile ferret," replied Alys, and wept for mere emptiness.

"*Mort de ma mère*," cried Fulk, "'tis ill work ambling thus. Let us lie close in the quick undergrowth, and woo dreams of potted lobster, first having shriven our dusty souls."

And so they found them after a many days, stark, each in the other's gripe. And

their pall was wrought of the dead leaves of yesteryear. The robins had done it. The red of their breasts was, I take it, the passionate heart's blood that showed through.

X.

MR. GEORGE MEREDITH.

IN the vestibule of Adolescence, the Boy stands at plastic pause, clay-soft to the imposed Idea. This is the Propagandist's hour; then, or never, the Vegetarian has his chance.

* * * *

A woman more nosingly fastidious of essentials, you might waste a season of Church Parades and never come up with. Yet she married her husband for his gift of digesting Welsh Rabbit.

* * * *

Her versatile nature swung in a dazzling orbit of aptitudes. Intrepid horsewoman, with an edged wit for dialectics, she could also sit the downy of postprandial arm-chairs with a firmness to wonder at, smiling focussed attention on bovine inanity.

* * * *

Present, you could swear to her for a glowingly constant; absent, she wrote "Will wire," and telegraphed "Will write"—to the chilling of assurance.

* * * *

A next-weeker for procrastination, there was Æacus in his eye for the delays of others. Chatham-and-Dover with himself, he was Time-and-Tide for the rest.

* * * *

Poetry and the affiliated indiscretions had always been viewed by the Family with profound distrust. To the Head, not incurious of the Burgeoning Period, this graft of Romance on a stem already shooting Rhythmics had hinted at a deranged heredity. A botany specialist, hastily summoned from Leipzig, checked the development at nick of the vernal.

* * * *

Bachelor by habit and a graceful seat by force of application, he had the manner of riding straight after hounds or women; but tempered by an instinct for country and a taste for the durable. He would choose the open gate at the fallow's corner, in contempt

of incredulous eye-lifts thrown over shrug of shoulders leaning back for the rise, rather than risk his stable's best blood over a low hedge, flushing young Spring, with heavy drop at fourteen stone on macadam flints, shrieking menace of a wrung fetlock for the ten miles home. In the other kind of chase he had cried off on suspicion that the lady's mother had died fat.

* * * *

"No Veuve like the Old Veuve," he cried across the opal iridescence, bubbles winkingly discursive at brim; and was resiliently instant to retrieve the solecism, like the connoisseur he was of Bacchus and the feminine. Was not this indeed the fair widow's first excursus into Epicuria since her husband's lapse to the underworld?

"Onions is off," the waiter interposed, with sharp recall by Phaethon-descent from ether to earth. She blushed a tempered rubicund. Should he retrospect for its meaning to the Veuve-solecism? Or did "onions" stand with her for an artificial excitative of the lachrymal, proper in tolerated widowhood tending to consolable? Opposing argu-

ments paced out their duello distance divisive of his dear mind; "New widows are the best" confronted by "The time of tears and convention is over." After all, was there so great difference? Let them embrace brotherly over boxed pistols to satisfaction of honour.

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[Of Lord Mayor's Day.]—Should not some poet capturingly perpetuate for us this scene, repullulant—a hardy annual—from the impenetrable of sublimity? Londinensian, surely, this progress of Montanus and his choir, tardy with turtle-lined abdomen; these civic fathers alighting at the Courts of Law, tribute of Commerce to claims of Justice; symbolic nymphs painted to braver than life, conscious of limbs posed at relaxed tension on chariots arrested in preposterous mid-career; gaudy within limits of the inexpensive; Gog-Magog, with historic retinue varicoloured to admiration, conducting tavern interludes at a remove; the whole better conceivable in France.

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[Lines on the publication of *Bismarck's Love Letters*; after *The Nuptials of Attila*.]

This is he of the iron throat,
 Bold at beer of Lager blend,
 Stout to swallow, and never wince,
 Twenty quarts or so on end ;

My Bismarck, O my Bismarck.
 He whose voice, a thunder peal,
 Rang across the squadrons' thud,
 Chirrup of stirrup, clank of steel,
 Sabre on sabre, shock of lance,
 Uhlan's lance on cuirass-plate ;
 Voice of the trumpet-blast of Fate
 Smiting the flanks of Seine in flood,
 Flood of the blood of the flower of France.

My Bismarck, O my Bismarck.

Strange to think he lived at home
 In a human sort of way ;
 Never, with his lips afoam,
 Felled the harmless patient cat ;
 Never actually sat
 In a fit of brutal play
 On his heir-apparent's head ;
 Never even pulled his ear ;

My Bismarck, O my Bismarck.
 Never brained the servant who
 Made for him his daily bed ;

Dealt in no domestic crime
 Such as bigamy ; merely wed
 One wife only at a time !
 Can it be we judged amiss
 Of the Great in Peace and War
 As regards his private sphere ?
 Erred, in fact, in looking for
 Stronger hero's stuff than this,
 My Bismarck, O my Bismarck ?

* * * *

It is the same France, implacably woman
 to the eyes of her, dowered for farce-play
 with the eternal mutable. Yesterday con-
 spuitive to the nauseous at mention of Drey-
 fus redivive ; swooping in guise of massed
 Amazons of the line, javelins low at thigh-
 rest, on solitary appealing for only Truth
 and Justice with what of voice remained
 from Devil-Isle torture. To-day uproarious
 in fantastic serenade of Liberty under bal-
 cony of discredited tyrant heavy with spoil
 of the unenfranchised, mildly ruminant on
 Ignorance butchered, he away, to make his
 Dutchman's holiday.

* * * *

See him there, this Rosebery, supine in

phantasy of exile on bed of Neapolitan violets, preferred for emollience; Baiae-windows open on the infinite of blue dimming to lift of Sorrento, Ischia hull-down in the Occidental; emergent at call of interesting occasion, rectorial or the like; triple bronze to resist allurements of Liberal matrons vocal for return of injured hero; a Coriolanus *de luxe*. See him, *Lord Ormont* of the civil, consoling the Misunderstood he counts himself to be with disquisitions on the Giant in Action, a "last phase"; reflective, not without pathos, of a personal penultimate, prematurely imminent, with Theban Sphinx for riddling exemplar.

* * * *

[On *Mr. Punch's* cartoon of Cronje and the Shade of Napoleon at St. Helena.]

Admire how the Tyrannical in current adumbration of Sambourne-pen stands at insular remove posed authentic; takes sullen salute of co-exile cognisant in vagueness of the over-again of Imperial Fact. A picture of contrastables confluent to similar; here your Dutch, exsurgent from Cincinnatus-plough, inexpert of externals transmarine

and other, territorial within limits of the fencible; there, your Corsican, cosmic to the utter of bellicose, insatiate of a shackled hemisphere one link short; labefact each before a like Necessitated, merging extremes.

* * * *

[Lines on Mr. Chamberlain's return from an excursion to the Mediterranean.]

Bronze-ardent with meridian suns,
 Scent of Italia's flowers about his boots,
 Behold the Ineluctable leap to land!
 Still salt by briny converse with the fleet,
 A tar in being. Dover's silent guns
 A little irk him, hardened to salutes.
 Behold him stand,
 Brummagem-factured, monocled, aloof,
 Unspoiled of admiration, envy-proof,
 Intolerably self-complete:
 Janus of War to ope or shut at will;
 An orb of circumvolvent satellites,
 Portentous past belief; of good and ill
 Bodeful to measureless of mortal ken;
 Now off the swung machine a bounding god,
 And now the ditchward guide of blinded men.
 So sees him Europe planted, she, at gaze;
 Sees him that Britain Greater by his nod,

Addressed to undreamed acrobatic flights,
Bent to negotiate
The sundering bar of centuries both in blaze ;
A salamander in asbestos-tights
Armoured against the igneous of Fate.

* * * *

A strange irruption of brute atavism, this
gallery clamour of the Hooligan loud to
extinguish the favourable of stalled Intelli-
gence; percipient Judgment merged in the
boo of Premeditation. Not without reason
was it recorded in the Pilgrim's Scrip: "*The
last thing to be civilised by man is the gods.*"

XI.

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK

(LORD AVEBURY).

ORIGINALITY is the mark of genius; but a love of common-place, or “a firm grasp of the obvious,” may be acquired by the humblest among us.

* * * *

Poverty is not necessarily shameful. It was once remarked of a great man that “he came of poor but honest parents.” As Burns so beautifully said: “For a’ that and a’ that!”

* * * *

Childhood, both in man and beast, is the period of innocence. Of *Mary’s* “little lamb” it was said that “its fleece was white as snow.”

* * * *

How interesting is the present century!

A hundred years ago there were fewer books. The population has also increased.

* * * *

It is best not to follow two points of the compass at the same time. The pilot that steers both for Scylla and Charybdis is in danger of missing them both (Homer).

* * * *

A man's work will often outlive him. Thus, Shakspeare and Watt are dead; but *Hamlet* and the steam-engine survive.

* * * *

It is generally recognised that in great danger you may show presence of mind, even though you are absent in body. Some of our best military criticisms are produced in Fleet Street.

* * * *

Botany brings us into relationship with flowers. Many people consider that the study of Nature is best pursued in the open air. This view applies also to hunting, shooting and fishing.

* * * *

And then the weather! How much of true happiness depends upon conversation,

and how much of this on the weather! Yet
 “there is no such thing as bad weather, only
 different kinds of good weather” (Ruskin).
 This true thought has often helped me in a
 London fog.

* * * *

Water is recognised as a necessity to
 ships. What should we do if anything went
 wrong with the ocean? Suppose “the deep
 did rot!” (Coleridge).

* * * *

In Art it is not enough to copy Nature:
 the Ideal should come from within. That
 is why models are so unimportant. There
 was once a great painter who always had
 the hangman to sit for his pictures of Venus.

* * * *

The power of Music is proverbial. It
 “soothes the savage breast” (Congreve),
 including snakes. It was Cleopatra who
 said, “Give me some music;” on which
 her attendant remarked as follows: “The
 music, ho!” Both these last passages may
 be found in Shakspeare.

* * * *

“ Home, sweet home ! ” I forget who said this.

* * * *

It would be difficult to name a single truly great poet who has not, at one time or another, referred to Love. It is Love that gives pinions even to the caterpillar. But we must beware of Sirens (Homer.)

* * * *

In reading we ought to employ selection. It is almost impossible to read every book that has been written. Scott's Novels is one of the Hundred Best Books.

* * * *

Birds are meant to be our companions. There is something very human in the parrot's voice. - And how superb is the plumage of the peacock !

* * * *

A Frenchman has said that “ to know all is to pardon all ” (this is the English version). It shows that we ought not to judge hastily. The story is told of a short-sighted person that he once saw in the distance what he took to be a man, but when he

came closer it turned out to be his own brother.

* * * *

Virtue is the happy mean (Aristotle). Thus, there is the highest authority for marriage. But with Solomon, and, in a less degree, with Henry the Eighth, it degenerated into a habit.

* * * *

Friends are a great blessing. Cicero wrote an entire essay "concerning friendship."

* * * *

Who can foretell the Future with any degree of accuracy? "To be or not to be," as Shakspeare said.

* * * *

"By that sin fell the angels," was said of Ambition. Yet a moderate ambition is commendable. Every private soldier was at one time understood to "carry a Field-Marshal's *bâton* in his knapsack," but this is now forbidden in the regulations for field-service.

* * * *

Euripides said something cynical about riches. Yet many things can be bought with money. This is one reason why the posses-

sion of wealth adds to the comfort of life. "If thou art rich, thou'rt poor" (Shakspeare) is on the face of it an untruth.

* * * *

Much has been written about the "uses of adversity." Let us hope it is true.

* * * *

There is a saying (based upon the Copernican theory) that Love "makes the world go round." It was for Love that Leander swam across the Hellespont, which is wider than the Serpentine.

* * * *

Many people cannot say "No!" Others early learn to say it when asked to do disagreeable things. "*Mens sana in corpore sano.*" If the last word is pronounced *say no*, this, taken with my context, is tantamount to a joke.

* * * *

Nature is governed by unvarying laws. Every day the sun rises; every evening it sets. The only local exception to this last rule is the British Empire.

XII.

MRS. HUMPHRY WARD.

OUT there on the terrace of the Villa Prighi the last of the sunset had ceased to illumine the intellectual brow of Hellsmere Bannisty. "Modelled by Praxiteles, tinted by Botticelli"; so his head had been described by an artist. Through the well-preserved growth that clustered round this noble organ he ran his long nervous fingers as he pored, with critical rapture, over the final proofs of his great *opus*:—*Italian Liberty: its Cause and Cure*.

Immersed in the splendour of one of those scenic descriptions which reflect a conscientious observation *in situ*—had he not rented the Villa Prighi largely for the very uses of local colour?—he could still appreciate the humorous exhalations that stole up from the old-world soil of the Campagna

through the sentinel lines of prophylactic eucalyptus. Yet in a general way it was not consonant with his detached personality to be affected by anything of a strictly humorous character.

Nor would a nature less absorbed in its own identity have put so severe a strain on the devotion of its audience. But to a type like Hellsmere's it did not occur that Euphemia was laying more surely every minute the foundation of an incurable catarrh. It only seemed natural that she should want to sit shivering in this deadly air for mere joy of hearing the following passage for the twenty-third time:—

“Above me, as I write, stretches the mid-summer cobalt of an Italian sky in the full sense of that expression. Below, beneath, before, behind, to right, to left, lies the vast sweep of the Campagna. To have seen Rome apart from the Campagna—rich though the Eternal City undoubtedly is in classical and ecclesiastical traditions, continuously maintained from the era of Romulus and Rhea Silvia down to that of Marie Corelli and Hall Caine, not excluding the

Pontiffs—is to have missed the intrinsic force of Italy's association with her own soil.

“Here from the terrace of the Villa Prighi I look out over avenues of ilex and stone-pine, over a wide largesse of rose and lilac and cyclamen, and other growths whether perennial or appropriate to the season, to where, like a phantom balloon, rises the airy dome of Peter, and, beyond, on the faint horizon, Soracte stands up and drinks the noontide. And everywhere, and always, always, always, the Campagna. Hour by hour, day by day, week by week, under varying conditions of light and weather, I have remarked the view from my terrace at Villa Prighi; and I can recall no occasion, however apparently trivial, when the Campagna in some form or other has not met my astonished eyes.

“But when the dying splendour falls on vineyard and ploughland, on broom and cytissus and aromatic bean; when waves of pellucid amethyst and purple come tumbling out of the wild west, and throw a reflected glory on the dazzling gleam of stucco antiques and sombre lichen-crustcd travertine;

and the love-lorn nightingale prepares to grow eloquent in cypress-bowers; then the Campagna is her truest self; then from her ghostly soil, a teeming hot-bed of forgotten effigies, uprise those effluvia of the shadowy past which intoxicate the lizard and other native fauna, and to an impressionist, like myself, are a most lively source of literary inspiration."

* * * *

From the Campagna to the moors of Ballynemet; what a change of *milieu*! And it was characteristic of Hellsmere that his spiritual condition always took on something of the colour of his physical environment. He was cognisant of a recrudescence of feeling in favour of the strait tenets of his childhood's orthodoxy. The very air, wafting warm scents of moorland, seemed heavy with Presbyterian conviction.

Almost involuntarily he found himself reviewing the processes, now logical, now arbitrary, by which he had arrived at his present tolerance of the principles of Christian Science, qualified by an obscurantist Panatheism. His early unreasoning accept-

ance of U. P. dogma; his tentative excursions in Kant, followed by a sudden and glorious emancipation from the school of Peebles; his reaction from the strain of the larger Secularism under the Pagan teaching of Barbizon and *La Bohème*; then, at first sight of the Eternal City, his *volte-face* from the doctrines of the Latin Quarter to those of the Latin Fathers; the yearning, out of a confused memory of Crockett, John Stuart Mill, and the *Contes Drôlatiques*, to find in traditional Authority a sure euthanasia of speculative thought; and, finally, the attraction towards the new Occidental creed of Faith-healing, culminating in an attitude of reservation and eclectic detachment.

Yet the chains of heredity were not to be so lightly thrown off. He had been reminded of their force as he swallowed his bowl of porridge at breakfast. And now, what the Scots oatmeal had begun, the heather and the gillies and the whining of the Gordon setters seemed likely to confirm. For a while he almost trembled to think that he was on the eve of an atavism.

The path up to the moor lay through

hanging woods lush with dew, alive with the stir of nature. Hellsmere's eyes, lifted from the page of Hume's *Essays*, fell on a great fir-trunk with its russet-red that seemed, under a cloudy sky, to retain the fire of departed suns. How was that for an image of the survival of religious emotions still aglow with the colour of discarded creeds?

The train of thought to which this figure gave an impulse was disturbed by a flash of gold plumage. A cock-pheasant went whirling through the brake. A squirrel, beady-eyed and tawny-brushed, peered from a pine and pursued his spiral ascent. Here and there went the bobbing of rabbits' tails speeding to shelter. Over the broad leaves of water-lilies lying flat on the surface of a dusky pool, a moor-hen hurried, dryfoot, like Israel's host, to the further bank. Hellsmere became subconsciously aware that all these furred and feathered creatures were actuated by a common passion for self-preservation, expressing itself in various manifestations according to their respective shapes and habits. What more natural! What else, indeed, was the human cry for immortality

but this same instinct in a form perhaps more spiritual, certainly more sanguine? Could it be possible, he asked himself, that the analogy went further? That the Powers above, in the careless calm attributed to them by the Lucretian philosophy, had no deeper designs on our existence than he, Hellsmere, had at that moment on these denizens of the woods?

And yet with them it was not mere untutored instinct that warned them to seek safety. There had been rude and bitter experience. Pheasants had been killed; though not, he hoped, in August. As for rabbits, they were a perpetual prey. What, indeed, was his objective at that moment? Was it not the destruction of certain forms of life? primarily the grouse, incidentally the hare, and, conceivably, the snipe? A divine shame smote his heart as he felt in the game-pocket of his coat and brought out a copy of the *Canticle of the Creatures*.

And now the moor stretched before him, sweeping up the long low braes of Athol, chequered with purple patches, here flaunting the conscious symmetry of a draught-

board, there counterfeiting the dappled shadows of the milch-kine of Apollo. The guns spread out into line. The dogs, unleashed, bounded forward with drooped necks and sentient nostrils lifted up the wind. Not even then could Hellsmere escape from his attitude of mental absorption. Though an early predilection for ratting had remained among the most poignant memories of his childhood, his subsequent trend had been towards metaphysics rather than pure animalism. Of a disposition too analytical for the comparative directness and simplicity of vision required in a perfect sportsman, he had sometimes, on occasions like the present, been tempted to follow up a line of abstract reasoning—associated, perhaps, with the identity of his *ego*—even when a crisis, such as the opportunity for a right and left, had seemed to demand instantaneous action. This tendency had from time to time been detrimental in its effects upon the bag.

And to-day he could not throw off a certain obsession of mind caused by his reflections upon the *Canticle* of St. Francis.

On reaching the commencement of the beat he had handed this work, along with Hume's *Essays*, Bishop Berkeley's *Sermons*, and *Sesame and Lilies*, to the man who was carrying his cartridges; but the words, "Praise Heaven for our sister the grouse," kept ringing in his ears.

The question, too, of intuition in dogs arrested his fancy. He derived an appreciable ecstasy from differentiating between the instinct of a pointer for the scent of the living, and that of a retriever for the scent of the dead or dying. How far were these qualities inherent in their natures, and how far were they a matter of training? And why, in whatever proportions inherited and acquired, were they more permanent in animals than in men? Why, for instance, had he outgrown his taste for Presbyterianism? and was it possible for him to revert to it by the mere process of reproducing the geographical conditions which evolved it?

Fascinated by the field of argument opened up by these enigmas, he was dimly conscious of the subdued voice of the head-keeper inviting him to "take a point." Mechanic-

cally he walked towards the dog, that stood poised like a rigid *simulacrum* of itself; mechanically he advanced beyond it, moving as in a dream; faintly murmuring, "For our sister the grouse."

A sudden nausea seized him, to the partial obliteration of the landscape. Was it to be tolerated that humanity, not content with the use of lethal weapons diabolically precise, must needs employ the instincts of one of the lower orders of creation for the annihilation of a sister existence? Surely the whole question of our moral responsibility to these lower forms, whether we label ourselves Positivist, Deist, or Orthodox, was here involved. If we hypothecate the existence of higher powers, can we count it consistent with their Divine nature to play off humanity against humanity for their own better sport? A Pagan doctrine, only excusable in the makers of Trojan and collateral myths.

And yet—but it was at this point of his internal argument that the birds got up and went away unscathed. Nor was this all; for the lamentable accident which ensued was a

further tribute to the complexity of Hellsmere's organism. The desperate character of his reflections had reduced him to a state of acute scepticism, in which he even permitted himself to doubt the actuality of all phenomena. A wave of subjectivity passed over him. Meanwhile he had, as if automatically, raised his gun in the direction of one of the rising birds and placed his finger on the trigger of the right barrel. The natural completion of this action was arrested by an inanition of will-power consequent upon the absence of his mind. The arrest was, however, only temporary. Before he could disengage his mind from the conclusion that all phenomena were alike in the quality of non-existence, he had performed a kind of reflex movement—the result of associated ideas—and pressed the trigger home. This happened—in even less time than has been required for the narration of events—at the moment when his gillie, after remarking “Hoot! mon; they’re awa’,” and advancing without further comment, had reached the position vacated by

the bird at which Hellsmere had pointed his gun.

By great good fortune, the major and more crowded portion of the discharge was intercepted by Bishop Berkeley's *Sermons*, which the man was carrying in an empty game-bag slung across his back. Only the outlying shot lodged in his actual body. To the inconvenience caused by these pellets Hellsmere alluded coldly in the language of Christian Science, urging that the injury was apparent rather than real ; but when representations were made to him subsequently in the gun-room he cancelled his obligations in conformity with the usual tariff arranged for these regrettable incidents, the scale of charges being regulated according to the part of the person affected.

The account of this *contretemps*, appearing in the North British papers on the very day of the publication of his work on Italian Liberty, created a great sensation in the literary world, and established the success of the volume. It was natural, therefore, that his immediate accession to the ranks of the Broader Vegetarianism should have been a

painful shock to the friends who had prophesied for him a political career. Later, his assumption of friar's orders in the Brotherhood of Assisi caused little surprise. The transition was regarded as the logical issue of his previous departure.

XIII.

MR. W. E. HENLEY.

Out of the large-limbed night,
Dewy and lush by tasselled glade and lawn,
The rumble and roar of roistering carts,
Insistent as the unconsolable sea,
Rolls in to Covent's ducal marts,
Groaning with vegetable greenery.
And, look, the eloquent lark
Urges his upward indeterminate flight,
Thus early drunk with joy. Nay, do but hark
How the lithe milkman at his watery trade
Maddens the slumber-sodden kitchen-maid
With virile voluntaries to the dawn!

Now, while the City wakes
To the old implacable game once more,
To the lucre-lust too hoary for life to slake,
Let us afield, Dear Boy, and briefly skirt
The pungent fumes of Piccadilly's floor,
And press to where the boon and buxom Park
Trembles through all her shimmering trees,
alert

To breathe the inviolate incense borne
On virgin airs of morn.
But lo ! what artless cavalcade is here
That spurns the Rotten Way
With strenuous four-foot thud and glimpses seen
Of middle distance, saddle and thigh between,
Worshipping, Orient-wise, the risen day ?
Be still, poor fluttering heart, and vail thy fear !
This is no heathen orgie ; in their eyes
I trace no hint of hierophantic mirth ;
No passionate impulse fires the sombre cheek,
Sallow with crude
And unassimilated food ;
Insane of appetite, but otherwise
Comparatively sane,
In these consenting solitudes,
Ere Fashion's tardier foot invade
A peace designed for penitential moods,
Unvexed of the vulgar gaze, they seek
To blood the anæmic vein
And stem the stomach's irrepressible girth.
Behold, it is the Fatty-Liver Brigade !

* * * *

The Turf

Ringin—

The state of the odds by the layers of odds

Bruited preposterous

Over the railings

Into the plunger's infatuate ear.

In days that succeeded
The purely chaotic
Condition of Nature,
Rhymeless, amorphous,
Much like the metre
These verses are made in—
In the commencement,
As I was remarking,
Turf was a feature
In Eden, the well-known
Site of Creation.
There lay the prime horse,
Absolute, thoroughbred,
Showing no blot
In his family 'scutcheon.
Unbridled, unpaddocked,
Unnoted of tipsters,
He took through the Garden
His usual canter,
Or sat on me, downy, absorbing his meal.

Then spake our Parent :
" Ho ! what a noble beast !
He, on his backbone,
Unless I'm mistaken,
Will carry posterity

Over green places
On wings of the morning ;
The joy of my offspring and pride of the
Race !

Such was our Forefather's
Dim adumbration ;
There have been other
More recent allusions
To sport on the flat ;
This was the first of them ;
Then and thenceforward
I am the Turf.

Circling and sweeping
Round Tattenham corner,
Prone down the hillside,
The hell-trap of Holocaust,
Flashes the field.
Out on the home-straight
(Lo ! where the Derby dog,
Openly imbecile,
Seizes this crucial
Occasion for crossing)
Forth fares the favourite
(Cannon to rear of him)
Rightly ignoring
The weight on his withers,
The subtly prehensile

Midget from over there ;
And to the manifest
Mirth of his backers,
Lifts his homunculus
First past the post.
That is my moment,
Crowded, delirious !
What did I tell you ?
I am the Turf.

The Turf

Turfy—

The state of the odds by the layers of odds

Bruited preposterous

Over the railings

Into the plunger's infatuate tympanum—

I am the Turf.

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Night and the starless Void,
And cloud-rack canopies that veil
The undiscoverable vault of heaven ;
And, over the City's coruscating gloom,
High in his beetling four-square tower,
Big Ben, the bull's-eyed Constable,
Flashing his sentinel beam for sign
How, underneath, the nation's tireless brain
Seethes at its sacerdotal task of framing laws.
With swirl of oozy ebb the River goes

Bedridden, bargee-blasphemous,
Lipping the terraced stones
Outworn with commerce of tea and cakes
And jaunty legislators' junketings.
Within, the uncommunicative mace
(Symbol of that portentous sovereignty
Which stamps the people's choice,
Arch-progeny of the proletariat Will)
Watches the tragic comedy
Play out its tardy length to stertorous stalls.
Hark where in windy platitudes,
Compound of the froth of undigested fact
And ponderous tub-thump wit of the hustings-
wag,
Each for his own advertisement,
They rant—they bellow—they abuse.
Here sits the Chief, disturbed
From healthy spasms of philosophic doubt,
Politely querulous of his truant ranks
Once counted adequate
To play the not-too-exigent part
Of gentlemanly walkers-on—
Now damned for irredeemable diners-out.
There lies the Opposition's fold
Incurably divided from itself—
These, ralliant to their country, right or wrong,
Those, cheek by jowl against her, wrong or
right.

And, in the desperate interval, behold
The dubious Campbell-wether of the flock
Protagonising in his own despite,
And butted fore and aft
Whither not he nor they precisely know.
This is our Ancient Mother of Parliaments,
Fallen on dotage-days
Varied by episodic savagery,
But, for the rest,
Abysmal, desolate, irreclaimably dull.
What have we done to you,
Mother, O Mother,
That you requite us with so quaint a farce,
Such disillusioning parody of your Prime?

* * * *

Inveterate airs that blow
As from a dim orchestral Age of Brass ;—
A rout of coryphées that toil and spin
With lustre of whirling lace and giddy gyre
Of hose rough-hued to ape
The arduous leg within ;—
Sallies of immemorial patriot wit,
Potent to kill, but impotent to pass ;—
And lo !
London's immeasurable mouth agape
From gallery to trancéd pit
With worship ; her Imperial eyes aglow
With the divine ecstatic fire !

There is no male here, this ambrosial night,
But feels the manhood vocal in his veins.
There is no woman, if I read them right,
But in her hidden heart
Envies yon breezy sylph the art
By which she turns these virile brains
To irreducible pulp, and sets the breast
Apant behind its hedge of shining shirt.
What un conjecturable spell
Inspires this exquisite torture of unrest,
Or where the point of what the humorous mime
Says, and the sudden midriff splits—
Not I, who rarely enter here, can tell.
They, rather, who from unremembered time
Follow the same old Grace's flying skirt,
The same old amorous play of pencilled eyes,
And the unwearied acrobacy of wits
Reiterate past fear of rude surprise—
These, lifting voluntaries clear and strong,
May quire aloud what happy quest is theirs
Who tread the nightly stairs
Of London's luminous Halls of Mirth and Song.

XIV.

MR. HENRY JAMES.

[*The Sacred Fount.*]

IT superficially might have seemed that to answer Lady Cheveley's invitation to her daughter's wedding was a matter that would put no intolerable strain upon the faculties of discriminative volition. Yet the accident of foreign travel had brought about that this formal invitation, found on my return, constituted my first advertisement of even so much as Vivien Cheveley's engagement to M. le Comte Richard Sansjambes. The original question, simplified as it was by public knowledge of the fact that I regard all ceremonial functions with a polite abhorrence, had, accordingly, taken on a new complexity, involving considerations of a high sociologic interest; as, notably,

whether, and, if at all, in what form, I should offer the lady my felicitations.

My obsession by these problems over a space of four-and-twenty hours was only partially relieved by contact with the *divertissements* of Piccadilly as I drove to the Prytaneum Club. To my hansom's temporary arrest, however, attributable to the stream of vehicles converging in a transverse sense at the corner of St. James's Street, I owed an interval of recrudescent deliberation. During that so tense period I conscientiously—such is the force of confirmed habit—reviewed all the permissible methods—and scarce fewer than a round dozen of variants lay at that moment in my right breast-pocket—of addressing a woman-friend on the occasion of her betrothal. Always the equivocal detachment of an unrejected bachelor had for me the air of imparting to these crises, poignant enough in themselves, a touch of invidious dilemma. The delicate question why the felicitator himself—to hypothecate his eligibility—had not been a candidate for the lady's heart, a question answerable, on the lips of her

friends, by a theory of self-depreciation, and, on those of her enemies, by one of indifference, remained—unless he chose, as one says, to “give himself away”—incapable of adequate solution.

For myself, it is true, by way of a passable solace in this cornucopious predicament, there was my known prejudice, amounting almost, I am told, to a confessed morbidity, in favour of the celibate state. It was still, however, open to the contention of malice that I, nevertheless, conceivably might have—whereas, in fact, I had *not*—submitted to the lady's charms, had they—as they apparently had *not*—been of a sufficiently overwhelming nature. But this, relatively, was, after all, a trivial embarrassment, mastered, on more occasions, already, than one, by a delicate subtlety of diction, in which I permit myself to take a pardonable pride.

“My dear Miss Vivien,” I, recalling the terms of a parallel correspondence, had written, “what brings to you, for whom I entertain a so profound regard, brings, to me also, an exquisite joy.” And, again, alternatively, and in a phraseology more instinct

with poetry and pith—"I, in your gladness, am myself glad." And, once more, with, I confess, a greater aloofness, yet, at the same time, positing, by implication, a plurality of suitors to select from:—"Quite indubitably enviable is the man on whom your choice has fallen."

But what complicated the situation and left me hesitant between these and, roughly, some nine other openings, was the reflection that, in point of fact, I had never set eyes on the Count, nor yet even heard—and with this my long absence from England must be charged—the lightest tale of him. Mightn't it be, after all, a marriage, purely, I asked myself, of convenience?—wealth, possibly, a title, certainly, exchanged for the asset of youthful bloom? Mightn't it be—and there was recorded precedent for this—that the man, being French, as one gathered, and calling himself by a foreign title—a pretension, commonly, that invited scepticism—had exerted over her some Magic, or even, taking into account both his foreignness and his Counthood, as much as Two Magics? Or, again, most deplorable of all, mightn't

he have acquired a hold upon her by secret knowledge of some skeleton, as the phrase is, in her private cupboard; an intrigue, let us daringly say, with a former butler, banished for that delinquency and harbouring vengeance against her house by the revelation of her complicity?

But here I subconsciously reminded myself that the nicest adepts in abstract psychology may, if they do but sufficiently long address themselves to problems abnormally occult, become the prey of a diseased imagination. And by great good luck the forward movement of my hansom, now disembroiled from the traffic, which had thrown off something of its congestion, caused a current of air which allowed me, the glass being up, a saner purview of the question. "When I reach the Prytaneum, I'll," I said, "look the gentleman up in the *Almanach de Gotha*." This, in fact, had been among the motives, had been, I might even say, the dominating motive, of my visit to the Club.

That atmosphere of considered serenity which meets one at the very portals of the

Prytaneum, and is of an efficacy so paramount for the allaying of neurotic disorders, had already relieved the tension of my introspective mood by the time that I had entered the *fumoir* and rung for cigarettes and mineral water. The greeting, familiarly curt, that reached me from an armchair near the fire, was traceable, it appeared, to Guy Malaby. Here, I was glad to think, I had found a living supplement to the *Almanach*, for I remembered him to have been a friend, some had even said a blighted admirer, of Vivien Cheveley. He had married, whether for consolation or from pique, his cook; and I now noticed, in a glance that embraced him cursorily, that his girth had, since his marriage, increased by some four to six inches.

It could scarce be more than a rude estimate, viewing the fact that I had no tape-measure about me, an adjunct that I from time to time have found serviceable in cases that, apparently, called for mere psychologic diagnosis; nor, had I so had, am I convinced that I should, in this instance, have allowed myself the application of it. Simply I moved towards him, and, at the same time, yielding

to the usage which a twelve-months absence requires, held out my hand. He took it with, as I thought, a certain surprise, quickly dissembled, but not, as I repeat, before I'd mentally remarked it.

At any other juncture I should have been closely tempted to pursue the train of inference suggested by this phenomenon; but just then, for the moment, I was preoccupied. Besides, anyhow, his initial observation proved his astonishment to be derived from a quite transparent, if not altogether venial, cause. "Been out of town," he asked, "for Christmas?" I confess that, though I had the good breeding not to betray it, this speech, the tone of which, under ordinary conditions, would not have affected me to the point of regarding it as a truancy beyond the prescribed bounds of gentlemanly casualness, caused me, having regard to the circumstance of my long absence, a calculable pain in my *amour propre*. Never so vividly had not merely the complexity, almost cosmic, of life in the Metropolis, its multiform interests and issues so exigently absorbing, but also the inconspicuousness of the vacuum created

by the withdrawal of any single—in this case my own—personality, been forced upon my attention.

Here, again, at any other time, I should have found abundant matter for analysis; but the entrance of the waiter with my cigarettes and mineral water, one of the former of which I deliberately lighted, recalled me from this inviting diversion. By a natural process of reaction I become cognisant of the necessity, every moment more pressing, of composing an answer to Mallaby's question.

Scarce anything could have been easier than so to impregnate my reply with the truth, whole and unadulterated, as to compel, on his side, an embarrassment which I, for one, should have viewed, in the retrospect, as regrettable. Yet, for a full three-quarters of a minute, towards the latter half of which period it was evident that Mallaby conceived my memory to have strangely lapsed, the temptation possessed me to follow the course I have just indicated. But, in the issue—whether more from a desire to spare his feelings, or, at least as much, because the

practice of *finesse*, even in conjunctions of negligible import, has had for me always a conquering fascination, I cannot determine—I, with a terseness sufficiently antiphonal to his own replied:—"Yes, Monte Carlo."

Then, from an apprehension that he might follow up his enquiries—for my travels had, in actual fact, been confined to Central Asia and the transit there and in an opposite sense—or invite a reciprocal curiosity, on my part, in regard to *his* Christmas, "By the way," I, as if by a natural continuity of thought, added, "who is this Count Richard Sansjambes that is to marry Miss Chevelley?" At the same time, not to appear too intrigued by the matter in question, I withdrew my cigarette from my mouth, flicked it lightly in air, and then abstractedly replaced it, less the ash.

I'd scarce done asking myself whether I'd formulated my enquiry into the identity of this Sansjambes with an air of sufficient detachment, or, in default of this, had so clearly underlined the suggestion of indifference by my manner of manipulating my cigarette as to assure myself against the possible

suspicion, easily avoidable, I had hoped, of a too immediately concerned curiosity, when "Ah! the fellow without legs!" replied Mallaby, with, as it, perhaps unwarrantably, seemed to me, a levity so flippant that it might have appalled a controversialist less seasoned by practice than I'd the permissible satisfaction of crediting myself with the reputation of being.

"But you have not then lost it?" I threw off, on a note of implicit irony.

"Lost what?" he asked.

"Your old facility, of course, in *jeux d'esprit*," I explained.

"On the contrary," he replied, "my translation of Sansjambes is not more literal than the facts themselves!"

His answer was so quite what I had not foreseen, that I was surprised, as by a sudden reflex jerk of the muscles, into an unwonted lucidity of diction.

"How did he lose them?" I asked.

"He didn't; he never had any to lose!" Mallaby, with unnecessary brutality, replied. "An early ancestor lost *his* under the walls of Acre. Pre-natal influences affected his

first-born, and ever since then the family has had no legs in the direct line."

"But the title?"—I was still too altogether the sport of surexcitation nicely to weigh my words.

"The gallant ancestor's own choice—prior, naturally, to the birth of his heir—to perpetuate the deed of prowess that won it. And his descendants take it on as a matter of pride."

By this I'd sufficiently recovered my habitual *aplomb* to be in a position, while reserving my perfected conclusions for a less disturbing occasion, to collate, as I sipped my drink, a few notes on the comparative periods of sustained effervescence in the cases, respectively, of Seltzer and Salutaris.

"And the cause you assign to this projected marriage?" I then, less with a desire for enlightenment, asked, than, my own judgment being made up to the point of finality, to seem to flatter him by an appeal to *his*.

"Oh, there's money, of course," he answered. "But that isn't all. It's the old tale

—Eve, apple, curiosity, with a touch of the brute thrown in!”

You could have knocked me down, in the vulgar phrase, with a feather. Here was Guy Mallaby, immeasurably my unequal in fineness of spirit, laying his fat finger plumb on the open offence, while I was still complacently nosing it on a false scent of Womanly Pity. True, he had enjoyed a three-months start of me in the running down of a mystery that doubled too distractingly on its traces for that instinctive *flair* to which I hitherto had urged a predominant claim; or was it the cook-wife that had piqued, through the stomach's Sacred Fount, his intellectual appetite? Gratuitously to admit him my superior on the strength of a forestalled judgment was the last of a quite surprising number of alternatives that just then occurred to me.

“I'm going to look in on Lady Jane,” I made evasion.

“She'll, if she's honest, endorse my conjecture; she's a woman!” he, without hesitation, observed.

More interestingly stimulated than I

could, at the moment, remember to have been by any previous visit to the Prytaneum, I made my way westward down the Mall of St. James's Park, taking the broad boulevard on the left. In the particular atmosphere of exaltation by which I perceived myself to be environed, it was easy to image these widowed avenues in their midsummer fulness, to revive their inarticulate romance, to restore, in the grand style, the pomp of their verdurous pageantry. Oh, there was quite enough of analogy to reclothe a whole Arden of *As you like it* ! It was really portentous on what a vista of alluring speculations I'd all but originally stumbled; virgin forest, in fact, before the temerity of just one pioneer, and that a woman, had stripped it this very summer so pitilessly bare. With how fine an abstraction from the moralities I'd, in the way of pure analysis, have probed its fungus-roots, have dissected its saffron-bellied toads, have sampled its ambiguous spices. And to have utilised a legless abortion for the genius of its undergrowths!

But I soon became aware of an appreciable recoil from the initial acerbity of my self-

reproach at being anticipated by the author of *Sir Richard Calmady*, when, upon a more meticulous reflection—for, by this time, I'd arrived opposite the footpath leading over the bridge that commands the lake and its collection, recognisably unique, of water-fowl—I'd convinced myself how little of consonance was to be found between this theme and the general trend of my predilections. About the loves of a so ineffable prodigy—and to differentiate them as lawful or lawless didn't, for me, modify the fact of their uniform repulsiveness—I detected a quality something too preposterously flagrant, an element *un peu trop criant* of pungent indelicacy. It needed only this flash of recognition at once to disabuse me of all regret for having been forestalled in the treatment of a subject of which the narrow scope it offered for the play of hypersensitised subtlety remained the incurably fatal defect.

So immediate, indeed, and so absolute was my mental recovery that I had scarce cleared the façade of Buckingham Palace and addressed myself to what I have, from time to

time, regarded as the almost contemptibly easy ascent of Constitution Hill, before I had in mind to rush to the opposite extreme, totally, in fact, to disregard the relation of legs to the question at issue. I won't, I said, allow the hereditary absence of this feature from the Count's *ensemble* to prejudice, one way or another, the solution, which I hope ultimately to achieve, of the original problem, namely, should I, or shouldn't I, offer my congratulations to Vivien Cheveley? and that second problem, subordinately associated with the first, namely, what form, if any, should those congratulations assume?

But I was instantly to perceive the superprecipitancy of my revulsion. It imposed itself, and with a clarity past all possible ignoring, that in this matter of the Count's legs the introduction of a new element—or, to be accurate, the withdrawal of an old one so usual as to have been carelessly assumed—was bound, whatever dissimulation was attempted, to command notice. The gentleman's lower limbs were, to an undeniably overwhelming degree, conspicuous, as the phrase runs, by their absence. A fresh con-

dition, as unique as it was unforeseen, had, with a disturbing vitality, invaded what had given promise, in the now remote outset, of being an argument on merely abstract and impersonal lines. For, even if one postulated in the bride the delicatest of motives, a passion, let us assume, to repair a defect of Nature, as much as to say, figuratively, "You that are blind shall see through my eyes," or, more literally, "You, having no legs to speak of, are to find in me a vicarious locomotion," even so a sensitive creature might wince at the suspicion that the language of congratulation was but a stammering tribute to the quality, in *her*, of inscrutable heroism.

And there was still an equal apprehension to deplore, should it appear that it was to an artistic faculty, on the lady's part, capable, imaginatively, of reconstructing, from the fragmentary outlines of his descendant, the originally unimpaired completeness of the gallant ancestor—much as the old moon shows dimly perfect in the hollow of the young crescent—that the Count owed his acceptability in her eyes.

“There it is!” I said, and at the same moment inadvertently grasped the extended hand of a constable at the corner of Hamilton Place; “there’s no escaping from the obsession of this inexorable fact. It colours the whole abstract problem only a little less irritatingly than, I can well believe, it has coloured the poor Count’s existence.” And I’d scarce so much as *begun* to exhaust the possible bearings of the case in their absorbing relation to simply *me*, as distinct from the parties more deeply committed and so, presumably, exposed to the impact of yet other considerations.

For, what lent a further complexity to the situation was that, even to suppose me arrived at the conclusion, effectively supported, that *her* motive for this so painfully truncated alliance was commendable, it still left her the liberty, accentuated by the conditions at which I have glanced, to misinterpret *mine* in congratulating her upon it. And if, on the other hand, her engagement were attributable to unworthy or frivolous causes, wouldn’t the consciousness of this, on *her*

side, give even stronger countenance to a suspicion of mere impertinence on *mine*?

That her motive indeed had been no better than one of curiosity—mother Eve's, in fact, for exploring the apple-tree—was the contention of Mallaby, and by him expressed with so resolved an assurance that it had, as I only now remembered, won me over, at the time, by its convincing probability. Hadn't his confidence even gone the length of claiming Lady Jane as of the same camp? And this recalled for me, what I had temporarily ignored in the so conflicting rush of ideas, the primary objective of my present disquisition. I'd overlooked the bifurcation of ways where the traverse to South Audley Street leads in the direction of Lady Jane's house; and now was poising irresolutely before crossing at the convergence of Upper Brook Street and Park Lane.

But after all, I asked myself, was a woman's final word really just the thing I stood in dearest need of in so nice a hesitancy? If *I* was conscious of a certain strain in seeking to confine this incident of freakish abbreviation to its properly obscure place in

the picture, would not *she*, with all her sex's reluctance to attack any question from an abstract standpoint, experience an insuperable difficulty in assigning to the Count's deficiency its relative "value"? And mightn't I, in a moment of unguarded gallantry, of simulated deference, let me put it, to her (Lady Jane's) assumption of a larger knowledge of women, or, say, simply a more profound intimacy with the particular woman, be carried away, against what I foresaw, even at this incipient stage of my reflections, would, in the event, turn out to be my better judgment, on a veritable whirl of grossly material considerations? At worst, after all, there's still, I said, the last resort of an answer in the third person, declining the wedding invitation on a plea, strictly untrue, of an earlier engagement. Meantime, while so many hitherto unregarded aspects of the matter called on my intelligence for their dues, the fabric of my problem was, I told myself, of a delicacy too exquisite for——

[*Left reflecting on kerbstone.*

XV.

M. MAURICE MAETERLINCK.

[I.—*Drama.*]

HARK! One would say there is a symbol coming down the corridor. Oh! Oh!

* * * *

Nineteenth Deaf Man. I cannot hear anything; and my eyesight is defective.

Deafest Deaf Man. I do not know what he is saying. I do not know what anybody is saying.

Least Deaf Man. I am glad that I am not blind. It must be very inconvenient to be blind.

* * * *

Where is my pet lamb? I do not see it on the sofa as usual. Ah! ah! I smell mint-sauce. No, I will not take any luncheon to-day. I loved it so. It was not altogether

like other lambs. It was more ominous.
And now it is cold!

* * * *

Hush! Not so loud. Sister Ann may
overhear you. She is a hundred and twenty-
five yards away under a willow; but you
never can tell how far her soul reaches.
Perhaps it covers as much as three acres.

* * * *

Sister Migraine, I have a headache. Have
you a headache, Sister Migraine? I think I
am going to be very unhappy.

* * * *

I ought not to sit on the edge of a well
and keep on throwing my wedding-ring into
the sun. What shall I do if I drop it into
the water? There! I have dropped it into
the water! What shall I do?

* * * *

There is somebody the other side of the
door. There is always somebody the other
side of a door.

* * * *

My hair inundates my entire being. It is
longer than two of me. Oh, see, it has come

right down from the balcony. No, no, you must not try and climb up by it.

* * * *

Did I wrench your arms too much? No? Yet I heard your bones sigh together like little mice in a wainscot. Do not look at me so aloofly, as if your soul were for ever in the next room.

* * * *

My eyes will not close. Why will not my eyes close? I must very soon say something to somebody.

* * * *

Oh! Oh! I have a pain in my destiny. It is just here. It is not indigestion. Oh, no! it is certainly not indigestion. [*This makes a very good ending.*]

* * * *

[*At the Royalty Theatre.*]

Pelléas. It is dark, Mélisande. Can you see to work in the dark, Mélisande?

Mélisande. Yes. I can see to work in the dark. But it is not dark, Pelléas. The limelight goes all round me. Cannot you see the limelight all round me?

Yniold (at the window). There's little

papa! there's little papa! I am going to
meet little papa! [Exit.

Pelléas. Your husband will find us in the
dark together.

Mélisande. No; he will not find us in the
dark together. There is limelight all about
me. Did I not tell you there is limelight all
about me?

[Enter Golaud and little Yniold, the latter
with a wax-candle.]

Golaud. You two were in the dark to-
gether.

Mélisande (fretfully). No; we were not
in the dark together. There is limelight all
over me. Cannot you see the limelight all
over me? I called the attention of Pelléas
to it just now; but he keeps on forgetting
about it.

Yniold. I have brought a candle. Oh,
look, little papa; she has been crying! Little
mamma has been crying!

Golaud. Do not hold the candle under her
eyes!

Mélisande. I do not mind the candle if he
likes to hold it under my eyes. The candle
is of no use whatever. The candle is less

than the limelight. Anybody can see by the limelight that I have been crying.

Golaud. I do not like the look of things. Still, there is the limelight, as she says. The limelight must have somebody to work it. I will go and ask some questions of the limelight-man.

[II.—*Philosophy.*]

EVENTS happen; but sometimes they tarry and need encouragement from us. At the age of fourteen we may be aware that we are ordained to die at thirty; yet we may go to meet destiny halfway, by jumping off a precipice at two-and-twenty.

* * * *

One could always tell which of one's schoolfellows was going to die accidentally young. They used to walk apart under trees; generally willows.

* * * *

I have known people who began by being beside themselves, and gradually got quite a

long distance away. And they never knew till somebody called their attention to it.

* * * *

Each one of us has a star from which descends one woman only, however multi-fold her disguises. Superficially, one would say that *Bluebeard* had several wives. This is an error. He was actually monogamous.

* * * *

It matters not on what subject the predestined talks. It may be that her speech is of a new bangle that she covets. None the less it is on the roof-tiles of the immeasurable that we float together.

* * * *

Some people are less fortunate than others; some are more so. For these an event beckons behind every blasted willow. They cannot open a door at the end of the simplest subterranean passage, without running into a booby-trap, or a crouching allegory, or something.

* * * *

The persons of the Old Tragedy had no leisure left from the thousand and thousand claims of murder or suicide. Yet the real

tragedy of life is found in the domestic bliss of the family circle.

* * * *

The spectacle of a plain, fourfooted cow sitting alone with her destiny, chewing the cud, and altogether unconscious of the laws of the Equinox, has in it I know not what of tragic that moves me more than the crash of conflicting mastodons.

* * * *

The true force of the drama lies not in making your characters say the things that are indispensable to the situation; but in making them think the thoughts that do not occur to them. Sometimes these may be represented by a loud aside without parentheses. But silence is also good; for it is, I know not how, by the things we omit to say that the sources of the soul become intelligible. Still, it is all very difficult.

XVI.

MR. G. BERNARD SHAW.

It was never my intention that the disabilities which hampered the many strong men who preceded Agamemnon should hamper me. They were, I take it, a brainless crew, busy with doing things instead of getting themselves talked about. There is always a solution (which seems to have escaped them) for the difficulty of finding a sacred bard to record you. Be your own sacred bard.

* * * *

In most periods the lonely genius, who is afterwards described as the outcome of his age, though he invariably has to create the taste by which he is ultimately appreciated, has been regarded, if regarded at all by his jejune contemporaries, as a *poseur*. It happens that I have been so regarded, and

rightly. Now, to correct the unhappy results of such an impression, in itself accurate, there is one salutary antidote. It is to pose about your pose. That is what I am doing now.

* * * *

The middle classes, fed to suffocation on the Romanticism of drawing-room drama and the *Family Herald*, take unkindly to the social iconoclast. It is, therefore, the business of this, the highest type of philanthropic reformer, to include his own image, or *eikon*, among those that he sets out to pulverise beyond hope of recognition. Let him engage himself as his own Aunt Sally, and so establish the impartiality of his critical attitude.

* * * *

I have a right horror of the egoism which finds amusement in making an enigma of itself at the expense of a public that has an itch for personal revelation. My moral position is of an almost pellucid transparency. I am an intellectual Puritan to the finger-tips, with an affectionate tolerance for the candour of a *Mercutio*. That is a conjunction, surely, that asks no apologetic explication.

And I will be yet more open with the world, and declare myself the charlatan I am. If I have given my friends to understand that I am immeasurably superior to Shakespear, I was trading upon their credulity. In point of fact, he is very nearly my equal; as a dramatic technician, that is; not, of course, as an exponent of latter-day philosophy.

* * * *

Perhaps the most pathetic feature in the modern drama—and Shakespear himself is not altogether blameless in this connection—is its fatuous *penchant* for associating action with motive. Yet, in real life, if there is one thing more obvious than another (which I doubt) it is that the commonest motive for action is to have none at all. Take arson. You will say that arson is a relatively untypical expression of energy. On the contrary, I see it mentioned in the papers at least once a quarter. Take arson, then. Do we ever find that jealousy, hatred, revenge—those darling bugbears of the Romantic stage—have been the motives for this form of action? Seldom, or never. People in actual life commit arson as a medicine for

ennui, to make pass the time; or else out of a morbid curiosity for noting the play of fire-light on neighbouring scenery; motives so inconspicuous that they are habitually ignored, just as they would most certainly be flouted in those hotbeds of Romanticism, the theatre and the law-courts.

* * * *

Or, again, take Love, which is popularly supposed to be more common than arson. When has Love ever constituted a motive for action? Only in the last decade or so, under the influence of sentimental drama. So vacant, indeed, are my countrymen of all original imagination that the decadent stage, masquerading as the mirror of humanity, has actually imposed its own conventions of Love upon the very lives from which it professed to draw them.

* * * *

I have elsewhere said that “ten years of cheap reading have changed the English from the most stolid nation in Europe to the most theatrical and hysterical.” I would go further and point to the terrible corruption in

foreign manners bred of contact with British decadence. Travel, as I have done, among the Latin races, and mark the recent changes in their demeanour. In rural byways they still retain that decorum of carriage and behaviour which comes of unspoiled intercourse with earth. But in the cities, and even in those villages that lie upon the tourist's beaten track, you will recognise the growth of demonstrativeness in their gestures, and of pseudo-dramatic methods in their deportment. What is the cause of this degeneracy? They have become infected by the deadly germs of that Anglomania which is also responsible for their recent adoption of manly sports, so-called, and other intolerable brutalities.

* * * *

To recur to the subject of accepted conventions—what hope is there for the salvation of audiences saturated with artificiality? None, though it were my own lips that essayed to recall them to the real. Go back to Italy's Venice, after witnessing its counterfeit in Olympia, and you will never

“recapture the first fine careless rapture.”
I am, so to speak, the original Venice.

* * * *

There is a tale told of certain visitors at the court of a semi-barbaric king, who offered to supply him with a nightingale, a bird of which hitherto he had no cognisance. During a temporary delay in its arrival they sought to appease the monarch by producing an instrument guaranteed to emit music of the same order. So beglamored was the king by its ravishing melodies that on the ultimate appearance of the actual warbler he dismissed the latter with contumely as a poor imitation of the original. I am, as it were, the real nightingale.

* * * *

A constant and fatal error with play-mongers is to imagine that there are themes, within the scope of their intelligence, which can appeal at once to the gilded Semite of the Stalls and the School Board *alumni* of the gallery. I say they have no single sentiment of pleasure in common. At times they are bored by the same things, but interested in the same things never. It may satisfy

Mr. Kipling's sense of the realities to assert that "the Colonel's Lady and Judy O'Grady" (on the strength) "are sisters under their skins." But, to take him on his own restricted lines, I happen myself to have made a study of armies (see my *Arms and the Man*), and I differ from him fearlessly and without pity.

* * * *

I have little sympathy for the writer who is lured from the strait road of Art by a passion for pedantic consistency in the general purposes, if any, of his drama. I hesitate to quote myself as a brilliant example of the contrary method; but I still think it was a happy thought to put my most modern criticisms into the mouth of a contemporary of Octavian; and another, though not quite so happy, to assign the exposition of my best twenty-first century philosophy (for it will take till then for the public to apprehend me) to a "Devil's Disciple" of the eighteenth. I may have faults, but a taste for academic purity is not one of them.

* * * *

Nor do I pretend to say beforehand

whether any given play of mine is intended for a tragedy or a farce. I choose to leave this matter to the audience to decide, having a rooted belief in the subjective plasticity of all great work. I have known my sentiments elicit laughter when I had privately anticipated tears; and I have seen the house divided, pit from stalls, as to which of these two receptions should be accorded to a speech of which the intention was equally ambiguous to myself. In the game of poker, as I am given to believe, the most accomplished artists are those who play without any settled principles of their own, thus permitting their motives to escape observation. Misunderstand yourself, if you would make doubly sure of a position as one of the Great Misunderstood.

*

*

*

*

I merit, of course, the abuse of the critics, who find themselves at a loss to arrange their labels on accepted lines; and the public is inclined to grow captious through inability to confirm their suspicions of an underlying sense in my plays; but, without some guarantee of popular disfavour, one trembles to

imagine what would become of one's hesitating self-esteem.

* * * *

To the great Artist there is always something inebriative in unsucccess; and though there may be danger of over-exultation induced by a run of splendid failures, it is better to perish this way than to die, as some successful authors have died, of a fatty degeneration of the brain.

* * * *

In conclusion I would join issue with those rash intellects that have assigned to me, thus early, a permanent seat among the Immortals. Admitted that I have the advantage of Sophocles and Goethe in enjoying a wider range of vision, I am very little, if at all, their superior in point of actual genius. But in my own case, as in theirs, I protest against the indefinite survival of reputations. The ages should always advance from great to greater, as their purview of humanity enlargens. And if this little collection of homilies should avail to check that tendency to Cock-Shawolatry which threatens, among

the chosen few, to perpetuate my claims as an Authority, neither I nor my readers will rightly grudge the pains we shall severally have expended upon this result.

XVII.

MR. STEPHEN PHILLIPS.

[*On the Production of "Herod."*]

How like a timorous sloth of tender years
My reputation hangs upon a Tree !
Bravely it bears my weight ; and yet the blood
Sings in my brain, not altogether used
To being upside-down.

I seem to hear
The strain of all the heart-strings in the stalls ;
And all the public breathing in the pit !
Now is the climax when the author's pulse
Is at its hottest ; now the crucial scene,
When everything is blank, besides the verse,
And either Herod or myself goes mad !

(*Later.*)

We stand together wreathed in wedded smiles ;
I never thought a Tree could spread such bows.

* * * *

[*On Australian Federation.*]

I heard a Cherub sitting up aloft
Cry : " She shall build a mighty Métropole

Almost at once ; and in its port shall swim
 The Universal Sailor girt with sharks ;
 And bastioned forts shall beetle over that
 Locality where —— comes to birth.”
 (This space is left for the New City's name,
 A vexed and indeterminate question ; I
 Will pay a topaz for the Missing Word.)

[Murmurs of satisfaction.]

There shall the kangaroo bound at his ease,
 And there the Federated Lands shall build
 (Australia ! do you notice this remark ?)
 A Stock Exchange, where Ophir and the East
 Shall vie for options ; with whose hoarded
 wealth
 The fabled pearls of Solomon, deceased,
 Shall relatively rank as pumpkin-pips !
 There the Coagulated Parliament,
 Incurious of cost, shall house itself
 In walls barbarically fine and large,
 Shaped to discapitol that ancient *Arx*,
 The tutelary haunt of Roman geese !

One night I dreamed (Australia ! please attend)
 About this Chamber, how its dome should shine
 With burnished nuggets drawn from neighbour-
 ing deeps,
 Great Boulder's ore, and ooze of Ivanhoe,
 To be an educative object-lesson

To the great L. C. C.'s artificers
Absorbed in wedding Holborn with the Strand.

Only a few more words and I have done.

[Repressed applause.]

There shall the Sun replace his blighted beams,
And there about a new Endymion's neck
Pale Artemis shall arch her ambient arms.
Before the glamour of its aureate rays
The scalp-compelling South-Sea islanders
Shall veil their tomahawks ; and it shall be
A joy to earnest heliographists,
And warm the chattering spooks of Diemen's
Land.

There shall the wide-world wombat flap his
wings,
And there, itself a prey to fascination,
The boa-constrictor, stealing up to town,
Shall ask the rabbit what the deuce it means.

XVIII.

MR. HENRY SETON MERRIMAN.

“ I WANT a new place to be a hero in ! ”
The speaker ended, as he began, abruptly. Silence is golden, but the next best thing is that your words should be fit and few. He was a strong man, but his eye had the quiet reserve that may sometimes be found with strength, a combination always attractive. There were lines, too, about his mouth that revealed a capacity for pathos as well as humour.

None of these characteristics, except perhaps his strength (a dangerous thing if allied to madness), imposed itself upon the observation of the young man whom he addressed—a clerk in the office of Messrs. Gaze, Catchem and Cook.

“ Is it a holiday tour you want ? ” he asked, tentatively.

"Mention a few novelties," replied the strong, quiet man.

"We are booking a good deal for the interior of Turkey," said the clerk.

"Fought at Plevna," replied the strong, quiet man.

"Then we have the Steppes of Russia on our new list."

"*Sbogom*—Lord love you! Sowed wild oats there years ago."

"Or a little round in Spain or Holland, personally conducted?"

"*Quien sabe? Hoe laat is het?* Speak the languages."

"Or say West Africa, perhaps? We are fitting out a small punitive expedition."

"Played with Edged Tools there in my youth."

"Or Patagonia? The very latest thing in explorations!"

"Ah! I have never been a hero there. Any other heroes pioneering in those parts?"

"Only one that I know of, and he's just back from tracking the Big Sloth."

"Sloth is a great impediment to enterprise."

"I said the Big Sloth."

"That makes it no better. Quantity is no excuse for bad quality. But, tell me, are the natives of Patagonia good and beautiful?"

"We have no reports to the contrary," said the clerk.

"A noble wife is a gift of the gods," said the strong, quiet man, absent-mindedly. Then, recovering himself, he added, "I will trouble you for a Tierra del Fuego Conversation Guide. *Mille remerciements! Leb'wohl. Hasta mañana. Che sarà sarà.*"

XIX.

MR. ANDREW LANG.

[*In one of his many collaborations, this time with Ouida.*]

IT is a commonplace of your anthropologist that the symptoms of heredity are more marked in early Spring. In the case of young Bamborough, a strain of the old Jacobite stock of Northumberland which stood for the "King" at Preston always announced itself with a certain exigency about the close of Lent. It was apparent not so much in an attitude of direct opposition to the House of Hanover as in a general restlessness under authority, a *penchant* for rising to occasions. Had Oxford known him in the '15, when Ormond failed to rouse Devon, he would probably have risked his head in the North with Mar and Derwentwater and the boy Radcliffe. As it was, he

was merely gated by his Dean for cutting chapel. [*Here Ouida takes up the work.*

Sitting in his tapestried chambers after College Mess, his oak was suddenly unsupported, and in burst the Hon. Bobbie Lackland in a gold and purple dressing-gown. "Just had a wire from Mortlake, old boy," he cried, slapping Bamborough on the chest. "No. 1 in the boat has wrung his withers, and they want you to stroke Oxford in the race to-morrow."

"When do they start?" asked Bamborough, wearily.

"Eleven sharp, against the ebb," replied Lackland.

"As you please, then," said Bamborough, with a yawn. "I have a wine here to-night; but I can run up to town in the tandem about daybreak, instead of turning in. Suppose a tenner would see the porter? Have a cigar or two." [*Here Mr. Lang resumes.*

The reader will draw his own conclusions from the *data* here submitted. I, for one, shall not be hurt if he traces in the methods of these young gentlemen an inherent lack of probability.

XX.

MR. GEORGE MOORE.

REBECCA GINS walked down the lane putting her feet forward alternately. There were hedges on both sides; one on the left, one on the right. The young leaves were a pale green. Overhead ran the telegraph-wires. The poles were about thirty-five yards apart. A thrush sat on a spray of black-thorn, which moved under its weight, now down, now up. Rain had fallen and the ground was wet, especially in the ruts. The second-hand feather in Rebecca's hat drooped a little over her left ear; and the third button of her off boot was wanting. Smoke went up from the chimneys, taking the direction of the wind. All these essential details (including the feather, which was out of sight) escaped Rebecca's notice. She was

not gifted with that grasp of actuality which is the sign of an artistic nature.

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MY DEAR YEATS,—You, who have taught me what Poetry means, in the original Fenian (I had already, at different epochs of my career, been introduced to Music and the Fine Arts, and pursued my investigation of these branches of culture without prejudice or pedantry, fascinated always by the charm of novelty and the delight of breaking virgin soil), you and I will offer welcome and the homage of hearts to the noble victim of that Tyrant whose foot is on the neck of our distressful Erin. We will cross by the Ostend Packet. It will start from Dover, either from the east or the west side of the pier, according to the state of the wind and tide. We will have deck-chairs, made possibly of wicker, and at any rate of wood and canvas. I shall sit with my back to the engines, watching the gulls flying with white wings in our wake. When you throw a bun to them they dip their bills in the foam to secure it. I have often observed this detail,

and drawn the attention of careless people to it. Life is full of phenomena, all equally valuable, from a pimple to a sunset. And you will croon a Song of the Secret Pomegranate, and I will set it to music on the deck. Have you noticed how the planks of a ship's deck-timber run parallel to one another, like the lines of a musical score before you fill in the notes? And when we arrive we will embrace the Champion of Freedom, and you will recite something to him, in ancient Erse verse, about me and the Irish revival; and the general idea will be as follows:—

By the lustrous waves of Liffey, by the ledge of
Cuddy Reeks,

By the Lough of White-foot Deirdre, by the
Blasted Hill of Shee,

By the Headland of the Daughters of the Snipe
with Seven Beaks,

I have carolled in the Gaelic, I have whispered
Erse to thee,

O'Moore, the terror of Saxon Tyrants!

Where the levin split asunder Dermott's bog at
dead of morn,

Where the ozier-wattled heifer left her tail in
Eogan's stall,

Where O'Brien shed his Breeches, we have met
and we have sworn

We would crown the crest of Kruger in the
old Rotunda hall,

I and O'Moore, the terror of Tyrants !

Since St. Patrick coursed for vermin on the Dun
of Druid's Doom,

When the Sleuth Hound felled the banshee
in the rift of Bleeding Gorge ;

Since the High-King up in Tara heard the
beetle's dying boom,

There has never, to my knowledge, been a
genius like George

O'Moore, the terror of Saxon Tyrants !

XXI.

MRS. MEYNELL.

DETACHED in his equilibrium, the Young Child is instinct with the ichor of Spring. He flushes a rhythmic pink, the implicit Colour of Life.

* * * *

The vital movement of grass is toward reticence rather than greenness. By the highways you shall see its embroidery, a mute protest to shame the scarlet resonance of the pillar-box. That is why the vestries will not have it so.

* * * *

To the glazed eye, dull with yearlong routine, Yarmouth brings relief with the bronze of her kippers. On your seaward breakfast-table they lie, a point of diurnal pungency; eloquent, too, of suggestion. Salt, that was the breath of their life, is the stuff

of their embalming. Not here, in the trite phrase, was death the cure of ill, save for a brief interspace. Then that which gave its savour to existence was itself made the cure of death, last ill of all.

That is why Yarmouth, for all its pier and sable minstrelsy, is still the inviolable hermitage of tired hearts. Its salt is something better than Attic. It breathes, as Athens never wholly breathed in her prime, the continuity of existence. It is vocal with the rhythm of death cured and corrected.

* * * *

Khaki has the colour of secretiveness; but the robin wears a cuirass that recalls the published blood. Yet is there also a privacy of the woods, where the bird takes on the tone of his environment. The ancients felt this when they discovered a note of khaki in the flutings of Philomel.

* * * *

Seen in perspective there is symmetry even in the suburb, futile else. Peckham has this dominant note.

XXII.

MR. WILLIAM WATSON.

On New Year's Day.

POTENTIAL in the marble's maiden womb,
The living forms of Buonarotti lay ;
So in the New Year's Alpha dimly loom
The orb'd infinitudes of Omega !

*On the Anniversary of the Opening of the British
Museum.*

Avid of knowledge, you that blindly rage
After the Undiscoverable Clue,
Walk up and see yon antic sarcophage ;
Its rusty mummy was as wise as you !

On the Modern Woman.

New Atalantas, straining fast and far,
How shall the old Milanions hope to beat ?
On what incalculable motor-car
Follow the trailing thunders of their feet ?

On hearing that the following letter had been addressed to the Rev. John Watson (Ian Maclaren) :—" Honoured Sir, me and my family wishes to let you know that our souls have been wonderful refreshed and elevated by your noble pome, ' Abdul the D——d.' "

Great Muse ! and can it be this godless isle
Breeds any so impervious of pelt
That they confound my chaste and Greekish
style
With kailyard cackle of the so-called Kelt ?

On a Rooster, shot in mistake for a Cockpheasant.

Count no man monk because he wears a cowl !
Had I but closelier looked thou hadst not
passed !
I took thee for thy better, tumid fowl !
And there thou liest, irrevocably grassed !

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